



THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
P O O R :

THEIR RIGHTS, DUTIES,
AND
THE LAWS RESPECTING THEM:
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

A NEW EDITION CORRECTED, AND CONTINUED TO THE PRESENT TIME.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

WHEN I at first determined to revise the following Letters, and to publish them in a volume distinct from that useful Agricultural Register* wherein they first appeared, it was my intention to address them to Mr. Pitt, under an absurd persuasion that a minister of state is expected, as it were, *ex officio*, to read those treatises which are, through the medium of the press, directed for his perusal; and also from a belief that, if he did peruse, he might, from the detail of what has been done by the legislature for the poor, has been written by those whose observations on the subject have been preserved in print, or from the hints and observations scattered throughout the publication itself, find somewhat upon the subject, which, when improved by his solid judgement, matured by long experience, might, in the form of an act of the legislature, meliorate and improve

* The Annals of Agriculture, by A. Young, Esq.

the situation of the poor, and diminish the expenses of their maintenance.

But reflection soon cured me of that presumption: a minister of state is the last person in the kingdom who can be expected to read books; he has more upon his hands, to read men, than he can easily get over in the daily routine of business. In the mean time, with respect to the *ardua regni*, he cannot possibly attend to a more irresistible monitor than the public voice; by which expression neither the howling of a savage and licentious mob, or the cries of pretended patriotism, are intended; but the voice of that general opinion, which arises from general knowledge of the subject, that speaks always in a tone, and with an authority, which is irresistible, and then truly is not the *vox populi* alone, it is the *vox Dei*.

To the Public, therefore, this history of, and these observations on, the police respecting the poor, are properly dedicated. If any part of the detail contained in the following pages, if any of the observations, are worth the attention of the Public; if any of the hints here thrown out tend, in the least degree, to meliorate the condition of the poor themselves, or to save the Public any part of the vast expense which lies so heavy on the shoulders of the landed interest, consistent with the general comfort of the society at large, their discernment will see it, their good sense will apply it, and their voice will
speak,

ſpeak, with irrefiſtible perſuaſion, to our rulers, that it may be done.

If nothing in theſe pages is worthy their attention, if no ideas can be collected from the variety of matter treated of which tend to throw light on this ſubject of ſo great conſequence to us and to our poſterity, the contrary preſumption will be properly puniſhed by the public neglect, and the inſignificance of the publication will doom it to that oblivion in which many other tracts on the ſame topic are buried.

In ſuch a caſe, the writer would have offended ſtill more againſt the public advantage, had he, by an addreſs to the miniſter, taken up any of his valuable time; but yet he wiſhed, through the medium of the preſs, to talk with him on the ſubject; to aſk him whether that vaſt increaſe of the poor's rate, which became known to the public by the means of the returns from the overſeers in the year 1787, is not worth his notice? Whether the ſubject itſelf is of ſo trifling an import as to be always left to the determination of a number of members of the Houſe of Commons, ſcarcely greater than would meet as a committee on a private bill? Or, whether he receives any ſatisfaction from a conduct ſimilar to that of the dog in the manger; doing nothing himſelf, and not permitting any other perſon to be active on the ſubject?

The fate of Mr. Gilbert's bill and Sir William Young's plan ſhews ſomewhat of this diſpoſition: the firſt probably
fell,

tell, like other miltapen and disproportionate buildings, *more ruit sua*; the last certainly contained some good regulations, was calculated to give a spur to our activity in the administration of the poor-laws, and to recal into the execution of them somewhat of their original intent; the promotion of industry, and the encouragement of labour.

But public rumour then reported that the minister intended to take the business under his own inspection, and, for that reason, he discountenanced the indigested schemes of private individuals; we know not, indeed, but at this instant he may be employed in digesting a code which shall comprehend in its scope every thing that can be expected from the union of great ability with an intimate knowledge of the subject; or, possibly, his mind may be made up, and, after much investigation of and attention to the matter, he may have come to this prudent resolution: I will do nothing; least done, like least said, is soonest mended. But yet this important business presses; the poor-rates are still rising throughout that part of the kingdom which cannot employ its poor in manufactures, and manufactures are by no means general, but local: besides, while not one quarter of the island receives any immediate benefit from the very flourishing state of our trade and manufactures, the three-fourths which are in still water feel themselves in danger from the very cause which creates the calm, and, oppressed with an additional weight by the surges which
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circle round the pool, find it is with difficulty they can keep the head above water.

While the distant rumour of large wages makes the poor dissatisfied with those which agriculture can afford, it creates a dislike to that labour which in their opinion, judging by comparison from vague report, how manufacture pays its workmen, is so poorly recompensed: this gives rise to idleness, which creates a call on the fund raised for their support; hence arise rates to which a four shilling land-tax is a trifling object; hence we know of instances where the poor-rates amount to the annual rent of lands. Is not this a fact? Is it not a grievance? If this is not corrected in time of peace, where will the financier find the dividends in any future war to pay the interest of an increased debt? Does not the subject, therefore, on this account, demand the attention of a minister during the halcyon days of peace?

The natural and political liberty of the mass of the people is clogged and diminished by the law of settlements; and, in the opinion of some of the best writers and strongest reasoners on this important topic, it is unnecessarily and unwisely abridged. Do not the poor-laws on this account, also, demand the attention of the state? Is it not just that every individual of the kingdom should enjoy as much freedom as is consistent with the safety of the whole? But it may possibly be replied in the language of state-prudence, This is not the time; see what the cry of liberty and the call
for

for freedom have done upon the Continent! The answer is obvious; the cases are widely different; the one is a temporary anarchy arising from the abolition of all government, the other would be a recovery from a restraint inimical to the interests of labour and industry, flowing from the power and enlightened mind of the legislature itself: the one *would be* legal liberty, the other *is* excessive licentiousness; therefore, let us not, by such a superabundant caution, suffer state-prudence to rivet our fetters closer, in proportion as our neighbours acquire a freedom, which they have not yet learned how to use with propriety or to exercise with dignity.

This language proceeds on the presumption, that it is a point proved in the following sheets, that a partial repeal of the law of settlement, or such a modification of it as would permit the poor man to go where he could best find employment, would be beneficial to the interest of the state as well as favourable to the liberty of the subject; and surely the point is fully and satisfactorily proved, if the united opinion of men of the most enlightened minds and most instructed judgement does, in any case, amount to proof; or if the wealth and prosperity of a kingdom increases in a ratio with the aggregate of the money earned within the kingdom by the labour and employment of its inhabitants.

But while this claim for a greater degree of freedom is made for the poor, and a melioration of their condition is proposed in this respect, care has been taken to point out
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the means of preventing such a degree of liberty, generating licentiousness, by recommending the erection of schools of industry, on the basis of the power given by the statute of Elizabeth, to raise by assessment a sum of money to purchase a stock of wool, hemp, flax, &c. for their employment; an object which seems scarcely attended to by those who now carry into execution the poor-laws, as appears by the very trifling total returned to the House of Commons by the overseers, as expended on that account throughout the kingdom. This surely is another object worthy the attention of a great minister, and it is an object that cannot generally be enforced without the assistance of the legislature; none of the subsisting statutes pointing out the means of doing it, distinct from those pests to the morals, health, industry, and activity, of the rising generation, --- work-houses; which are horrible, although, as the police respecting the poor is at present regulated, necessary evils.

The claims of the poor on society have also been glanced at in the following pages. By this expression, no abstract ideas of a claim to equality, either in legislation or property, has been canvassed; but simply that claim to a fair retribution for their strength and ability to labour, which is their only birth-right; for, it is a principle arising from necessity, that, in all civilized societies, there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water; but those who fill up the lower, though useful, rank of our fellow-subjects, infinitely exceed in number and in actual utility all the other classes

of society put together; their claims are, therefore, as serious rights, and they demand from the state full as serious a consideration as any other claim upon it, for security of political liberty or private property; the right to receive a compensation for their labour, adequate to their necessary wants, while they have a capability of labour, is certainly due to them, and the right of maintenance from the more opulent classes of society, when that capability to labour is passed, is another debt which society owes them.

In the discharge of this demand, has arisen that burthen which the landed interest in particular have great cause to complain of, the poor's rates; which, in many districts, when united with the land-tax and tithes, amount almost to a disinherison; for, although the occupier or tenant nominally pays the tithes and poor-rates, the land in fact bears the weight, and the total is taken from the landlord's pocket; therefore, while we are sinking under this treble load, is it not natural, is it not just, that we should inquire into the transactions of past times, and search the records of antiquity, to explore on what principle of legislation, from what consent, virtual or implied, of our forefathers, from what system of laws, human or divine, this ruinous fact, though apparent paradox, should happen? That, from the same circle of land, the ecclesiastics claim a tenth of the produce, in most instances equal to a half of the rent; the state one-fifth; and the remainder of the reserved rent will not always

ways satisfy the demand of the poor's rate. In the following pages, that inquiry has been made, and the mystery has been, in some degree, developed.

Another object worth the attention of the minister of a great nation has been comprehended in this inquiry; an object not confined solely to any particular code of laws, but embracing all legislative acts whatsoever; the whole force and the energy of which lie entirely in the means provided for insuring their exact and uniform execution. What are all acts of parliament, which profess to comprehend every rank and denomination of subjects, but a rule of municipal conduct which *all* are to guide themselves by? and the vindictory sanction contained in them is the compelling power. Now, if that sanction is such, as when called into use, indicates a presupposed depravity in those who are to be governed, an injury is done in the very prelude; and the test of the ordinance is vitiated *ab initio*, because the moral delinquency of the society is prejudged. Such is the sanction which is expected to enforce the execution, not only of the poor-laws, but of most of the penal clauses in the Statutes at Large; they are to be enforced by penalties, on the information of fellow-subjects, who the legislature supposes will degrade themselves to become informers; not for the good of the public, not from patriotic, moral, or religious, motives, but from the vilest of all, from the sordid motive of gain, it is supposed that a subject of the state will place his neighbour under the correction of the law.

This general idea disgraces the nation, and the principle is proved by experience to be ineffectual.

The manufacturing and commercial interests of the nation seem to have understood mankind better than the statesman, or at least they have formed a better opinion of their neighbours; for, in the acts of parliament to prevent frauds and abuses amongst the manufacturers and artizans, they have modelled the penal sanction on a different principle; the whole penalty is given to the poor, and they are, in a committee, empowered to appoint an inspector, whose duty it is to go his rounds, to see the regulations enforced, lay his informations, and see the penalty distributed according to the act. The strict execution of these acts of the legislature is a proof of the efficacy of the means used; for, the penal sanction of laws is not intended, like cobwebs, to catch flies only, and suffer the larger insects to break through the web; it is a net for all, and equally intended as a compulsive regulation to the *poor* as to the *rich*, to the *overseer* as to the *magistrate*: a hint, therefore, from these regulating statutes, might give energy to the poor-laws and vigour to the execution of them, or at least would increase the revenue for their maintenance from the proper sources, --- the pockets of those who undertake an office, but neglect the duties annexed to it.

On the whole, the public will read, in the following pages, a summary history of the duties of the poor to, and their claims from, society, throughout that part of this kingdom

kingdom subject to the poor-laws, traced from the earliest times in which the poor, and their interests, have been considered by the legislature, and continued to the close of the last parliament ; together with a transient view of the thoughts and opinions of those whose writings on the subject have been handed down to us ; interspersed with observations as the subject gave rise to them ; together with such reflections as have arisen from an attention to the whole of the evidence here submitted to the public, compared with the opinions of those men, eminent for their abilities and the purity of their intentions, who have made this inquiry an object of their contemplation.

The present critical situation of this kingdom, so different from that peaceful and prospering state which it occupied during the period through which much the greatest part of the following treatise was written, calls upon every man, whatever may be his class or condition of life, to support, by all the means in his power, the constituted government of his country, which can no way be so effectually done as by promoting industry, economy, and good morals, among the poor. If, in times of peace and prosperity, this is the more particular duty of the magistrate, in the commencement of a war, the principle of which is as novel as its event is uncertain, it becomes a crime to neglect that which, in times of peace, would be thought no immaterial obligation ; and, if the duty of a minister should impel him, in those times, to
make

make such regulations in the internal police of the kingdom as to call forth the greatest possible production of its industry, with which the prosperity and happiness of all ranks in the state must be connected, much stronger should he feel that impulse in the beginning of such a war as the present, the consequences of which to our religion, our morals, our laws and constitution, no human eye can foresee ; but the immediate effect of which on our trade, our commerce, our estates, and our property, we must all soon feel : therefore, there can be no time or situation more proper than the present for an inquiry of the kind here offered to the public ; although there may be many enlightened minds in this kingdom whose abilities and means of information may qualify them to offer a more satisfactory treatise.

T. R.

CLARE,
March 12, 1793.



P R E F A C E

P R E F A C E

T O T H E

S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

SOME reason may be expected by the public for the alterations contained in this Second Edition of the History of the Poor, &c. and, probably, some account of the motive which influenced the author to its continuation. The first is, undoubtedly, due to his readers as a matter of right : the second he rather considers as an act of choice, on his part, with which he can have no objection to comply.

The course of inquiry which the investigation of this subject naturally pointed out brought me to the knowledge of the ancient mode of distributing the revenues of the church. This branch of the history of elder times caught my attention by bringing to view an ob-
solete

sole claim, on a certain part of the ecclesiastical revenues, towards the maintenance of the poor; and, although many generations are passed away since such a claim was exemplified by the practice of the age, yet it struck me as sufficient to found an equitable expectation of the assistance of the parochial clergy in the management and regulation of the domestic habits of that class of our fellow-subjects to whom they were, in remote days, not only spiritual pastors, but distributors of relief in times of distress.

The office which is intended to be trusted to the clergy in the management of the poor, if the Bill now before the House of Commons, or any other on a similar principle, should pass into a law, renders it unnecessary to dwell on this subject, as it will be a proof that the expectation of parliament fixes itself on the parochial clergy, as gentlemen eminently qualified by situation, education, and principle, to take some share in that most necessary and important point of our internal police, to which we ought all to pay our most active attention; --- the regulation of the poor. And, as there exists no doubt but that the clergy, on their parts, are as *willing* as they are *able* to give their assistance, the pressing for it, on the principle of an equitable right or duty, is become an ungenerous surplussage: besides, the attempt to fix this claim, in order to engraft a duty, has been thought by many, to whose opinions I pay much deference, a topic more replete with harm

harm than good, and has occasioned a publication which, probably, would otherwise have been more honourably noticed, to be passed over almost in silence, although by no means in contempt ; while the principles of its author, as a friend to the hierarchy, have been somewhat called in question.

That part of the Inquiry into the History of the Poor, their Rights and Duties, is, therefore, in this Edition, omitted.

With respect to the author's motive for the continuation of his History to the present day, he candidly confesses two impelling reasons. The first, he hopes, will be allowed, as founded on public principle ; to give more light on this important subject than was in his power at the time of his writing the Letters contained in the former Edition. This country has now experienced the effect of the present system, through a time of scarcity, till lately unfelt ; it has seen, that, as the skin of the infant expands itself to the stature of the man, so does the principle of charity, which now has, for near two centuries, become, to the immortal honour of this nation, the law of the land, expand itself to those stretches of imperious necessity which admit of the expenditure of additional millions to preserve our poor countrymen from want ; and that at a time while the political necessities of the state press upon all ranks of people with a force hitherto incredible, and have, unitedly, occasioned a magnitude

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nitide of expence, which all the abilities of an able financier can scarcely provide ways and means to answer. But, at the same time that *humanity* feels gratified, our *prudence* should also be able to concur in approbation of the vast expenditure which has been, and may continue in a certain degree to be, incurred in the maintenance of the poor. This will not be the case until, by some actively-efficient measure, the industry of the lower classes is called out to do its best, before the pockets of the next class of useful subjects of the state are emptied to the relief of their poorer neighbours.

The writer must also confess a tacit pleasure in committing to the press the last sheets of the continuation of his History, as it will appear from them that the first edition of this tract has not been written in vain, but that our countrymen will probably reap some advantage from this employment of his hours of leisure, as it may have been the means of exciting the first abilities in the nation to an investigation of the subject, and occasioned Desire to be united with Power in the service of the cause. And although the present Bill, which is now before the House, the first public result of that union, may not meet the ideas and expectations of all parts of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws, which cannot be a matter of our wonder, the intricacy of the subject, the wide extent of its operations, the number of interests any rule which regulates the conduct of so many millions

millions of people, in different situations, must clash with, and the little pains which is taken by people in general to understand an act of parliament of some intricacy, being considered; yet we may, with confidence, trust that the measure is now in good hands; because this nation, after the lapse of near two hundred years, has again seen, in The Bill, for the better Support and Maintenance of the Poor, now before the House of Commons, an instance of a minister of state, in the midst of innumerable difficulties attendant on our present arduous political situation, taking upon himself the burthen of a measure of the first importance to the internal happiness of the nation, which has been from that remote time till now left to the straggling attention of any member of parliament; and, when this fact recalls to our memory the wisdom which characterized the ministers of the reign of Elizabeth, (and the parliamentary journals of those times inform us that the famous forty-third statute of her reign, the present corner-stone of our poor-laws, was not the produce of one session, but the collected valuable remnants of many bills on the subject, which had been, in the parliamentary language of the day, *dashed*,) let us not despair of the best consequences arising from the present united application of abilities, knowledge, and perseverance, to the better support, maintenance, and education, of the poor.

LETTERS

L E T T E R S
On the Poor;
THEIR
RIGHTS, DUTIES,
AND THE
LAWS RESPECTING THEM.

L E T T E R I.

DEAR SIR,

Clare, 1791.

HEREWITH you receive the first letter of a series, which shall comprehend an investigation of the causes that produce so much misery and distress among our poor; which will be accompanied, during the continuation of the subject, with hints tending to a plan, that, it is imagined, may render their situation more comfortable, and lessen that heavy burthen of rates, which impoverish the landed interest, and, in fact, anticipate the source of our political expenditure.

I began the inquiry during the former part of the winter, with the intent of sending it to the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture; but doubted with respect to the propriety of the subject for that compilation; until, having the pleasure of your company at Clare, you indicated a wish that it might be sent you.

B

It

It very forcibly struck me, that, during the solitude of a long winter, spent in the country, in the lapse of time which daily passes away between the hours allotted to refreshment and repose; that mind must be torpid and inactive, in which many ideas do not arise that cannot be referred to personal views or selfish considerations, and which are not occasioned by objects of business or pleasure, but take their origin from better motives, and impulses of a higher nature; from reflections on the relative state our happiness is placed in, with respect to that of our friends and more immediate neighbours, in the first place; of our countrymen, in the next; and, ultimately, not only of the human race, but of the whole animal creation.

One serious cause must, therefore, arise from this source, to taint the happiness of a life passed in retirement; as our ideas take their colour from the more immediate objects of our observation, it is impossible but that something of a sombrous and unpleasant hue must tinge the mind, while it attends to what passes in that class of society which is more immediately subject to our observation; and while we perceive and feel, as it were, the sordid misery and distress of our near, though humble, neighbours, it is impossible that a mind, rightly disposed, whose best energy is to be alive to the woes of others, can enjoy uninterrupted ease, while so much misery is so near the threshold; charity can do much, but cannot do every thing, nor for every body, although seconded by the best intentions and most liberal purse; objects of misery, like mountain above mountain to the weary traveller, arise to the view; creating despair of attaining to the end of their wishes, even in those who possess the strongest and most liberal minds, and recalling necessary and honest Prudence to her seat. But still one source of beneficence may be opened without fear of impoverishment, and the powers of the mind may be called to the aid of charity. Is it impossible to explore the causes of that misery which we discern among our poor neighbours? And, the causes being explored, may not a remedy be pointed

pointed out? The attempt is worth the labour, although the event should not be successful; this one fact being too glaring for humanity to be blind to, that, while a tenth part of our countrymen enjoy the comforts or revel in the luxuries of life, the patient and industrious multitude are sinking beneath a load of poverty and wretchedness.

Reflections, such as the preceding, gave rise to this inquiry; I thought that a few of the leisure hours of a country life could not be better employed than in an attempt to investigate the causes of that misery which we see among our working poor, and to point out some probable and practicable means of relief and amendment of their condition; conceiving, also, that the ideas and hints, which might arise from such an inquiry, could not make their appearance with so much propriety in any publication as in the *Annals of Agriculture*; because the object of it respects the happiness of a class of our fellow-creatures, without whose manual labour the fruits of the earth could neither be sowed or reaped; and also recollecting, that, if a ray of reason is elicited in the progress of the inquiry, it is due to the shrine of Agriculture, which, if not Wisdom herself, bears a strong resemblance of her divine original: I therefore dedicate the following pages, on this too-much-neglected subject, to your service, and your reader's patient candour.

The page of history reveals to us this melancholy and awful truth, that the happiness of millions has, in all ages, been at the beck and in the power of units, and those often the meanest and worst of mankind; myriads have fallen by the sword, disease, and famine, the victims of war, led on to their destruction by wretches who have disgraced the human race; but our inquiry has nothing to do with the dire effects of zeal, despotism, or political revolution; our employment lies in the vales of peace and plenty; our purpose is to investigate this problem, Why our laborious poor are so wretched? Does the complaint arise from physical causes, or from the regulations of society? Can society, by laws, regulations,

example, or by any and what means, meliorate their condition?

The unceasing laws of nature must, in every climate, have their energy; effects must every where be analogous to, and flowing from, their cause; gradations of comfort arise in civilized society in due proportion to the degree of civilization; the squalid inhabitant of Magellan's Straights, although so wretched and negatived in appearance, in all that makes life supportable, shares, doubtless, a degree of happiness in proportion to his capacity of enjoyment; that capacity enlarges as civilization prevails, and means of obtaining the objects of our wishes also increase. In this island, a disposition to relish the comforts of life, the meanest of us equally possesses with the greatest; surely, therefore, those comforts correspondent with our situation, should not be removed at such a distance from the grasp of any of us, as to be attainable only by a breach of the laws of society. — In some climes, favoured by a more direct approach of the solar ray, the various articles of dress are an incumbrance, and the native has no care what raiment he shall clothe himself with: in such climate he may, literally, imitate the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin, and are clothed only in the attire Nature prepared for them. How different is the necessity in this higher latitude; scarce a natural day passes away, even during the summer solstice, but our comfort and health require that clothing, to obtain which the price of many days' labour must be paid. How much stronger does urgent necessity require warmth of clothing in the dreary leafless winter, when every gale wafts rheumatism and ague; and what is essential to the health and preservation of the parent, is surely not less so for the child. Hence, in this country, arises one unceasing call for no inconsiderable share of the price of labour; a call sanctioned as well by an attention to the preservation of life as by the dictates of decency, the result of ideas connected with civilization.

Another

Another strong and urgent demand on the scanty revenue of the poor man, is the expense of fire. In more southern latitudes, the whole year may be passed, and it may not be an article essential to the life or health of the inhabitant: possibly, in climates included in ninety of the one hundred and eighty degrees of north and south latitude, the lower classes of society see not the blazing hearth, or have no occasion for it in their domiciles throughout the year: their habits of life are different; their simple food, consisting principally of the fruits of the earth, requires not much assistance from fire to make it suitable to the palate or proper for digestion; we read that the inhabitants of the islands in the South Sea* knew not the use of hot water; but, in this island, fire is necessary, at times, throughout the whole year; in summer, for preparing the food, and in spring, autumn, and winter, for the comfort also, if not for the preservation, of the cottager.

Our climate also occasions another demand to screen the poor man from its rigours. Throughout a considerable part of the habitable world, the genial warmth of the atmosphere is such, that the human race requires scarce any protection from the common air and sky: in those climes, man may wander with man, joint tenants of the shade; but here, a domicil is necessary; although the hardy aborigines of the island might not require such a shelter, yet man, tamed and made tender by the arts of civilization, demands a threshold, within whose sacred bounds the domestic hearth may be sheltered, as well from the assaults of the weather, as those of his boisterous or impertinent neighbour; hence, therefore, arises another call on his slender income, an income earned by the labour of his hands and the sweat of his brow.

These three necessary and unavoidable calls on the finances of the poor have been already stated, in the articles of clothing, fire, and dwelling: but a much larger and more important de-

* Cook's Voyage.

mand remains to be mentioned,—the daily supply of food; the supply of such meat and drink, as shall enable him, day after day and year after year, to pass through a life of hard labour and constant fatigue; a degree of labour which the strongest of us, whose muscles have not been trained to the purpose, would shrink from in the experiment of a day, perhaps of an hour; and the produce of this labour, the reward of these toils, to be expended, not on himself only, but frequently to be divided with a wife and family of children, who often have no honest means of increasing their husband's and parent's income.

But this is not all: the occupation of the labourer, as well as the nature of his being, subjects him to acute illness, to chronic disorders, and at length to old age, decrepitude, and impotence; the instant any of these unavoidable misfortunes of life attack him, the source of every comfort is stopped, and without the aid of his more opulent neighbours, or, what is infinitely to the credit of this nation, without the interference of the godlike laws of his country, this useful class of our countrymen would sink in the arms of famine or despair.

These, I apprehend, are the physical causes of that depth of wretchedness and misery which we too often see in the cottages of the poor; not to mention the wayward nature of the human disposition; the example and prevalence of vicious habits; the fascinating charms of intoxication; the consequential habits, idleness and dissipation; the indolence which is concomitant with a broken spirit; and that carelessness and indifference to what may happen in future, which is too apt to arise in the mind that cannot see its way through present difficulties: these are frailties inseparable from the nature of human beings, which increase and aggravate their distress, and which nothing but a proper sense of religion can remove; and neither the power of the legislature or the wisdom of the philosopher can teach to alleviate.

But

But it is not from climate, it is not from the frailties of human nature alone, or the necessary wants and demands which the preservation of life and health inculcates to the mind of man, and the insufficiency of the earnings of bodily labour to attain the gratification of them, that the appearance of the labourer indicates such wretchedness; the laws, the customs, and habits of society, are all contributory to this effect; and the excess of civilization occasions distresses superior, yet similar, to what the savage experiences in his state of nature; superior, because *his* distress is not aggravated by a near view of the tantalizing contrast, the enjoyments of opulence and luxury; similar in the effects, which are, cold, hunger, and disease; in the one instance, the savage must be satisfied with the order of nature, which establishes no law of appropriation, but occupancy; he, consequently, cannot blame the laws and habits of society, which aggravate, if they do not, in fact, give rise to, the misfortunes of the English labourer: this is an assertion which demands an inquiry; and, if the principle is established by such an investigation, should not those laws, habits, and customs, be modified, to correspond with the feelings of humanity?

In the first place, it is apparent that bodily strength is the only patrimony the labourer enjoys; this is to supply him and his family with the necessities of life: the same patrimony, in conjunction with the opportunity of exerting the faculties of the mind, the inhabitant of an uncivilized country possesses; the first is restrained by the laws from trespassing on *appropriated* property; and, in this country, all that can be called property, is *appropriated*; the other has ample scope for the exercise of his faculties, both of body and mind; the gifts of nature lying open to the first man who has strength or dexterity sufficient to occupy them. Here is a manifest advantage which the savage possesses, and the laws of his country have taken from the English labourer: but have not the laws, the maxims, or the benevolence, of society, given to the poor some equivalent,

equivalent, instead of the opportunity of obtaining property by occupancy? the objects of which being, in every instance, already occupied, he is reduced to the sole means of bartering the sweat of his brow for the necessaries of life; they surely have, and an attempt shall be made to point out the substitutes.

The labourer is worthy of his *bire*, because he gives for it his sole property, his strength and his time, reserving to himself only sufficient intervals for refreshment and repose: what ought therefore to be his *bire*? The answer is obvious: the necessaries and comforts of life, equal to the reasonable wants of that class of society among which he ranks. Does he receive recompense for his labour equivalent to such a reasonable expectation? The examination of the fact shall be the answer to the question; and, that the inquiry may be as close to the point as possible, let us examine, in the first place, how the retributions for labour were paid in days of yore; whether they then stood in the same proportion with the necessaries of life, in times when luxury was not so universally diffused, and the cottager, not having the sight of the rich man's enjoyments so immediately under his eye, might be supposed to be better contented with his homely fare, than in these days, when the strong expressions of the poet are verified in every village:

— Sævior armis

Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.

L E T T E R II.

FLEETWOOD's *Chronicon Pretiosum* will assist us in this inquiry; and, that the conclusion of the argument may not be supposed to rest on the foundations of fancy, some extracts from that useful compilation shall be produced.

The

The intention of the author was not much dissimilar to that of the present tract, except that he had a point to prove, we have only a subject to examine; and, to prove his point, he has searched not only all the publications then extant on the subject, but also many manuscript accounts of different monasteries, where the prices of the different articles of life were regularly inserted, and in some instances where the prices of labour formed also part of the account. But no certain comparative view can be formed on this head until about the middle of the fourteenth century; when, by an act of parliament passed in the 23d year of Edward the Third, the wages of the labourers were regulated, on account, as the preamble of the statute recites, of the great increase of wages occasioned by the plague:* by the first chapter, every person able of body, and under the age of sixty, not having means of maintaining himself, is bound to serve those who are willing to employ him, at the wages which were usually given six years before the plague, and stated to be,

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
To haymakers and weeders, by the day - - -	0	1
Mowing meadows, by the acre or day - - -	0	5
Reapers of corn, in the first week in August, by the day,	0	2
In the second week, and to the end of the month -	0	3
Threshing a quarter of wheat or rye - - -	0	2½
Threshing a quarter of barley, beans, pease, or oats -	0	1½

That excellent model for all parochial antiquities, Sir John Cullum's History and Antiquities of Hawstead, will also assist in forming a more accurate idea of the proportional prices of labour and provisions in Suffolk throughout some part of this century:

* This preamble indicates the cause of the advance in the price of labour, a decrease of the number of hands, and proves the policy of the act to decrease, not increase, wages.

				s.	d.
1387.	Wheat threshed, per quarter	-	-	0	4
	Other grain	-	-	0	2
	A reaper, per day	-	-	0	4
	Man filling dung-cart three days	-	-	0	10½
1389.	Wheat reaping, per acre	-	-	0	7
	Mowing an acre of grafs	-	-	0	6

These prices are without meat, drink, or other courtesy demanded. *

The prices of provisions, and the necessaries and comforts of life, were, during the same century, as follow :

A. D.				£.	s.	d.
1309.	A pair of shoes	-	-	0	0	4
1314.	A stalled, or corn-fed, ox	-	-	1	4	0
1314.	A grafs-fed ox	-	-	0	16	0
	A fat stalled cow	-	-	0	12	0
	A fat sheep unshorn	-	-	0	1	8
	A fat sheep shorn	-	-	0	1	2
	A fat hog, two years old	-	-	0	3	4
	A fat goose	-	-	0	0	2½
	Ale regulated by proclamation, in respect to price,					
	a gallon	-	-	0	0	1
1338.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	0	3	4
	Barley, a quarter	-	-	0	0	10
	Pease and beans, a quarter	-	-	0	1	0
	Oats, a quarter	-	-	0	0	10
	White wine, a gallon	-	-	0	0	6
	Red wine, a gallon	-	-	0	0	4
1387.	Barley, at Leiceſter, a quarter	-	-	0	2	0
1388.	Lactage of a cow with its calf, one year, and a hen,	-	-	0	6	8

* History and Antiquities of Hawſtead, p. 188, 190.

				£.	s.	d.
1388. Wheat, per quarter	-	-	-	0	4	0
Oats, per quarter	-	-	-	0	2	0
An ox	-	-	-	0	13	6
A boar	-	-	-	0	1	8*

It is not an easy matter to determine, from the prices specified in Fleetwood, what was the average-rate, at which provisions were sold, the year parliament regulated the price of labour; for, about the middle of this century, years of dearth and plenty almost alternately follow each other, and the pestilence also occasioned a considerable difference; but the articles extracted are in those years, when none of these causes affected the price of provisions, and may therefore be esteemed a tolerable exact average for the fourteenth century.

In the beginning of the next century in the year 1404, the pay of a labourer was sometimes two-pence, sometimes three-pence, as appears from a computus of the Prior and Canons of Burchester; and in

				£.	s.	d.
1446. Labourers without diet	-	-	-	0	0	3½
From Michaelmas to Easter, 1 <i>d.</i> less.						
A mower in harvest, without diet	-	-	-	0	0	6
A reaper and carter, without diet	-	-	-	0	0	5

The prices of necessaries and provisions from the same computus:

				s.	d.
1407. A cow	-	-	-	7	0
Two bushels of wheat	-	-	-	0	10
Five bushels and a half of salt	-	-	-	3	4½
1425. Pease, per quarter	-	-	-	2	2
Gallon of ale, from 1 <i>d.</i> to	-	-	-	0	1½

* Fleetwood's Chron. Pret.

				s.	d.
1425.	Gallon of red wine	-	-	0	8
	Gallon of sweet wine	-	-	1	4
	Two yards of russet cloth for the shepherd	-		2	2
	Thirty pair of winter gloves for the servants	-		4	0

The following from other computus's:

1444.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	4	4
	Malt, a quarter	-	-	-	4	0
	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	1	8
	Fitch bacon	-	-	-	1	8
1445.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	4	6
	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	2	0
	Gallon of ale	-	-	-	0	1½
1447.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	8	0
	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	2	1½
1448.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	6	8
	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	2	0
1449.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	5	0
1450.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	8	0
	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	2	0
	Gallon of ale	-	-	-	0	1
1463.	Wheat, a quarter	-	-	-	2	0*

In the sixteenth century, only two instances are to be found of the wages of a labourer, one in 1514, the other in 1557.

A. D.		s.	d.
1514.	Labourers from Easter to Michaelmas, except in harvest,	0	4
	Ditto from Michaelmas to Easter	0	3
	A mower in harvest, with diet, 4d. without	0	6
	A reaper and carter in harvest, with diet, 3d. without,	0	5

* Fleetwood's Chron. Pret.

1514. A

					s.	d.
1514.	A woman-labourer, and other labourers, with diet,					
	2½d. without	-	-	-	0	4½
1557.	Threshing a quarter of wheat	-	-	-	1	1
	Ditto of rye	-	-	-	0	10
	Ditto of barley	-	-	-	0	5

Prices of provisions, &c. in the 16th century:

					£.	s.	d.
1512.	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	0	2	0
	Beans, a quarter	-	-	-	0	4	0
1513.	Oats, a quarter	-	-	-	0	2	4
	Beans, a quarter	-	-	-	0	4	2
1515.	Beans, a quarter	-	-	-	0	4	2
1533.	Fat oxen	-	-	-	1	6	8
	Fat wethers	-	-	-	0	3	4
	Fat calves	-	-	-	0	3	4
	Fat lambs	-	-	-	0	1	0
	Beef in London 2½lb. or 3lb.	-	-	-	0	0	1
	Mutton, per quarter, in London	-	-	-	0	0	8
1557.	Wheat, a quarter before harvest	-	-	-	0	8	0
	Wheat, a quarter after harvest	-	-	-	0	4	0
	Malt, a quarter before harvest	-	-	-	0	5	0
	Malt, a quarter after harvest	-	-	-	0	4	8
1558.	A good sheep	-	-	-	0	2	10

In this inquiry there is no occasion to enter into an explanation of the comparative value of money in the three centuries, through a great part of which these notices have been taken ; because the prices of labour and provisions have been valued by the same species of real or imaginary coin ; and therefore the value of such, although very different from what bears the same denominations in this century, is quite competent to illustrate the ratio the prices of labour bore at these periods to the prices of the necessaries of life.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R III.

INSTANCES of the prices of labour, and the cotemporary prices of provisions have been continued, by the assistance of the *Chronicon Pretiosum*, to a later æra than that in our ecclesiastical history; when the 31st statute of Henry VIII. ch. 13. laid the axe to the root of all monastic possessions in this kingdom, and transferred their estates and rights to the crown. The effect this total change of property had on the situation of the poor remains to be considered.

It will, at first sight, be thought, and is indeed believed to be the fact, by those who have superficially investigated the history of this period, that this act, at once, struck off many of their comforts, and deprived them of many sources of assistance, which are supposed to have flowed to the poor in numberless streams, from the kitchens, refectories, stores, and cellars, of the monasteries; and that the different acts of parliament for their relief, which reflect honour on the annals of our history, towards the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the ensuing century, arose from a necessity, occasioned by this capital stroke of the 8th Henry's despotic authority; but the history of the times does not authorize the conclusion.

It rather appears that what streams did, in fact, flow from these ecclesiastical fraternities, to the poor of the kingdom, were shallow and penurious; at the best, the coarse offal of a homely board; indeed, if the mode of life which was pursued by the nobility and gentry of this age be considered; if we recollect, that the metropolis was not then, and, indeed, has not been till lately, that overgrown monster, which engulfs, within its maw, a property that, spread on the humble board of the cottager, would feed millions; but, on the contrary, almost every village then boasted, as its constant inhabitant, one or more substantial, if not ennobled, landlord, whose

whose hospitable seat bore a semblance, according to the riches and rank of the owner, to that economic profusion, which, by the instance so happily preserved for the information of posterity, by Dr. Percy,* appears to have graced the character of the fifth Earl of Northumberland, who lived near the beginning of this century; we shall not, if similar instances, in proportion to rank and fortune be supposed to be prevalent, imagine the poor to have much felt the want of such assistance, as the heads of monasteries permitted to be given away at their gates; which, from the relations of modern travellers, who have lately visited those countries on the continent, where monastic institutions are still in full force, and especially from the observations of Dr. Ducarel, in his tour through Normandy, where the customs, endowments, and charitable donations, of the monasteries and priories may be supposed, from their former connection with, to be similar to, what was experienced in this country, appear to be insignificant and trifling, always excepting those instances where the particular motive of the endowment was to ensure a hospitable reception to the traveller. Tanner also, by a note in the preface to *Notitia Monastica*, appears to be of opinion, that it cannot be attributed to what the poor received from the religious houses, that no parochial assessments for their relief were found necessary during the prevalence of the monastic institutions; although it appears that some of the larger priories dignified one of their officers with the name of almoner.

But, be this fact as it may, it is to be presumed, that, if the poor did not sustain any great loss from the abolition of the monasteries, in the article of any considerable relief, they might have received from them, in provision or alms; they certainly felt one great inconvenience from the number of the necessitous being con-

* The Regulations and Establishment of the Household of Henry Algernon Percy, 1512. Printed for Dr. Percy, the present Bishop of Dromore, but not published.

fiderably

siderably increased; because, on the dissolution of the smaller monasteries, in the year 1535, whose revenues did not exceed two hundred pounds a year, it is said, that not less than ten thousand persons were sent to seek their fortunes in the wide world, without any other allowance than forty shillings and a new gown; and a revenue of thirty or thirty-two thousand pounds a year was vested in the crown; and, when the greater monasteries were dissolved, in the year 1539, and a revenue of one hundred and four thousand nine hundred and nineteen pounds was diverted from the maintenance of people in idleness, and began to flow in different channels,* if the number of the poor, thrown upon the public by the dissolution of the lesser monasteries, be added to the number which may also be supposed to have become a burthen to the public by the dissolution of the greater monasteries, computing that number by the proportional revenue vested in the crown by the latter event to the revenue also vested in the crown by the former, amounting to a total of near forty-three thousand persons, who in the lapse of a few years had become additional objects of charity; for, although many of the members of the greater monasteries were allowed pensions, yet, if it be considered that they now enjoyed the liberty of becoming fathers of families, such a calculation will not appear to be extravagant; it will then not occasion our surprise, that a few years after this event, the legislature should find occasion to interfere in their behalf, when probably not less than a hundred thousand persons, who had no visible means of maintenance, pressed on the distribution of the charitable fund vested in trust with the ecclesiastics, now in part wrested from their gripe; and also became importunate suitors to the desultory feelings of charitable individuals, who might naturally be moved with compassion at the sight of their father-confessors now become needy fathers of a young offspring.

* *Notitia Monastica*, Preface.

Besides,

Besides, the wars, which, from the conquest, had kept our population thin; a number of lives having been thrown away in the different contests, within the kingdom, for the sceptre; on the continent of Europe, for foreign possessions; and in Asia, on romantic principles of religious chivalry; had now, for a considerable period, ceased; and near a century had elapsed since the battle of Bosworth had seated Henry the Seventh on the throne, who, by his marriage with Elizabeth, the heiress of the York family, had united the claims of the two houses in his person; and no internal commotion having, since that event, occasioned any considerable waste of blood; and, except at the battle of Flodden-Field, which seems, for a time, to have quelled the animosity of our northern neighbours, the nation having suffered no loss of inhabitants from foreign wars; peace, of course, and its concomitant, population, had increased the riches of those who possessed the opportunity of acquiring, and, at the same time, the number of those, whose humble situation precluded them from such attempts; the number of inhabitants, therefore, who had no means of support, except from their labour, consequently was considerably increased,* and, most probably, among the crowd which pressed on the public from the dissolved monasteries, few were there who could handle the plough, the flail, or the spade; but many, who, if they could not dig, were not ashamed to beg; a privilege which different acts of parliament had already laid under certain restrictions.

* In 1377, the number of inhabitants in England and Wales amounted to 2,092,978. In 1583, to 4,688,000.

CHALMERS'S ESTIMATE.

L E T T E R IV.

THE situation of the poor, with respect to the price of labour and the necessaries of life, their claims also on the charity of those in whose possession was centred the property of this kingdom, having been considered; it will now be a topic worthy our attention to relate, briefly as possible, the notice the legislature of the kingdom has taken of them, from the period when they first became objects of legislation, unto the present time when they participate of a revenue amounting to near three millions sterling per annum, raised for their employment and relief by the authority of the state.

This inquiry may, with great propriety, pass over that distant æra, the transactions of which history has preserved in very faint and doubtful records; and, indeed, it is not probable that, in times when this island enjoyed not any regular form of government, a great attention should be paid by our governors to the welfare of the poor; nor is it matter of wonder that while the petty reguli of the heptarchy were contesting the boundaries of their insignificant dominions; or while a foreign family, attended by a swarm of martial and needy followers, were contending for the throne of England, or disputing among themselves for the prize they had obtained; that any humane or wise regulations should take place with respect to the poor, who were then only considered as the means by which the claims of their respective lords might either be enforced or defended; and, viewed in that light, they rank in a different class of citizens, and are distinguished by epithets different from, but not more respectable in society, than that of husbandmen.

After the family of William, the Norman, had been established on the throne for several generations, and Edward the First, having

having made the conquest of North Wales, turned his attention to the defenceless situation of the lower class of his Welch subjects, and produced, with the assistance of his parliament, that code of laws known in our statute-books by the name of *Statutum Walliæ*; in which were regulated the modes by which they might obtain redress of private and public wrongs; and in which it is enacted, that a poor man, instead of putting in pledges to prosecute a suit, on suing out a writ, should only pledge his faith: from the date of this statute, which was passed in 1284, no mention appears of the poor in the acts of parliament until 1349, when the statute of labourers regulated their wages, as has been already mentioned, and in strong language declared that their labour, while they were able to work, should be their only resource, by the following words: "That no one, under pain of imprisonment, by pretence of piety or charity, should presume to give any thing to those who were able to labour, to encourage them in idleness and sloth, that by those means they might be compelled to work for the necessities of life." Another statute passed in the same reign, which gave the poor the right of an attain in pleas, real and personal, without fine, and the statute of labourers, also, was confirmed, and the observance of it enforced by an imprisonment of fifteen days, and also by the punishment of burning them in the forehead, with an iron in the form of the letter F, if they left their work and went away into different towns, or into another country; and also obliged the officers of cities or boroughs, in which they might reside, to deliver them up.

From this period, until the 2d of Richard the Second, the statute-book is silent with respect to them; the parliament then, 1378, confirmed the statute of the 23d of Edward the Third, and the other statutes of labourers, and ten years afterwards repeated the confirmation; and farther directed that no servant or labourer should depart from one hundred, rape, or wapentake, to another,

to serve, or live elsewhere, or under pretence of going a pilgrimage, without a letter patent, containing the cause of his going, and the time of his return, on pain of being put in the stocks until he finds surety for his return. This act of parliament also regulated the wages of yearly servants, in husbandry, allowing to the bailiff 13s. 4d. and clothing once a year; to the master-hind, 10s.; the carter, 10s.; shepherd, 10s.; oxherd, 6s. 8d.; the deye, 6s.; plough-driver 7s.: their wages were enforced, and the people were restrained from giving *more* by pecuniary penalties: for the first transgression, forfeiture of the overplus; second transgression, double the overplus; third offence, treble the overplus, or imprisonment of forty days. By the same statute, those who had served in any agricultural occupation, until they were twelve years of age, were restrained from being put out to any trade or mystery, on penalty of the indenture, or covenant, being void; and all servants in husbandry, and labourers, were prohibited to wear any sword, buckler, or dagger, except for defence of the realm in the time of war; but they were permitted to have bows and arrows, and to use them on Sundays and feast-days: all unlawful games were also prohibited: the seventh chapter of this statute also directed, that impotent beggars should live in the cities and villages where they were resident at the time of passing the act, and if the inhabitants of the said cities and villages *ne voilent ou ne poient suffir de les trover*, i. e. were not willing or able to maintain them,* they should be taken to other towns in the hundred, rape, or wapentake, or to the towns where they were born, within forty days after proclamation of the act, where they should continue for life.

Three years after the date of this act, the legislature made a laudable provision for the poor, from the appropriations of bene-

* This translation may possibly be inaccurate.—I have searched the French dictionaries and glossaries in my possession, and confess I cannot find such a meaning affixed to the verb *trover*, but know of none so proper.

fices, which was confirmed in the beginning of the reign of Henry the IVth ; at which time it was enacted, that no labourer should be retained to work by the week ; but for what reason it is not easy, at this distance of time, to conjecture.

The legislature remained silent on the subject from this period until 1414, when, by the second statute of Henry the Vth, justices of the peace are directed to send their writs for fugitive labourers and servants to every sheriff in England, and are also empowered to examine labourers, servants, and their masters, on their oaths, of all things done by them contrary to the ordinances and statutes, and to punish them, on their confession, as though they were convicted by inquest ; which power is also recognized in the second year of Henry the VIth, with respect to those who take wages *superior* to what are allowed by statute ; and, in the sixth year of the same reign, it is enacted, that justices of peace, in their counties, and the mayors and bailiffs, in every city, borough, and town, shall have power to make proclamation in every county, city, borough, and town, in full session, once a year, how much every servant, in husbandry, should take for his service for the year ensuing ; and that two proclamations should be made between the feasts of Easter and Michaelmas for that purpose ; which act is confirmed in the eighth year of the same reign.

In the year 1436, wheat and barley, being at a small price, (that is to say, wheat at 6s. 8d. and barley at 3s. per quarter,) are permitted, by a statute of the same date, to be exported without licence. Six years afterwards this statute is confirmed for ten years ; and, in 1444, it is made perpetual ; and, in this year, the legislature also enacted, that the wages of husbandmen, in harvest-time, should not *exceed* the following rates : a reaper, 4d. a day with board ; without board, 6d. : a harvest-man, or driver, 3d. with board ; without, 5d. : women-labourers, 2½d. with board ; without, 4½d. : and that the wages of servants in husbandry, by the year, should not *exceed* the following prices ; a bailiff, 23s. 4d. with board,

board, and 5s. for clothes; a chief hind, carter, or shepherd, 20s. with board, and 4s. for clothes; a common servant, 15s. a year, board, and 3s. 4d. for clothes; a woman-servant, 10s. board, and 4s. for clothes; a child, under 14 years of age, 6s. with board, and 3s. for clothes; and also directed that a servant, in husbandry, purporting to depart from his master at the end of the year, should give him half a year's warning, or else serve him the year following.

From this time, no notice is taken of the agricultural poor, and no new regulations which could affect them are to be found in the statutes at large, until the eleventh of Henry the VIIth, 1494, except an act which passed three years before, prohibiting pulling down, or suffering to decay, houses of husbandry; by which means, the preamble to the act says, in some towns, where upwards of two hundred persons *were* occupied, and lived by their lawful labour, *now* only two or three herdsimen are employed, and the rest fall into idleness.* By the second chapter of the eleventh of Henry the VIIth, vagabonds, and idle and suspected persons, shall be set in the stocks three days and three nights, and have no other sustenance but bread and water, and be then put out of the town; and every beggar, not able to work, shall resort to the hundred where he last dwelt, is best known, or was born, and there remain, on pain of like punishment: and no artificer, or labourer, shall play at any unlawful games, except during Christmas. Two justices are also, by the same act, empowered to restrain the common selling of ale. It is curious to see how early, after the relief of the poor became an object of the legislature, the regu-

* The legislature, two centuries ago, seems to have been aware of the bad consequences, to population and industry, that arise from the consolidation of small farms, which, where general, is a measure which strikes at the root of every stimulus to agricultural industry among the poor, by excluding all prospect of using the plough and sickle for themselves.

lation of alehouses was also a subject of their attention, and with what an equal step the laws respecting vagabonds and alehouses proceed together.

The parliament also, in the same year, enabled poor persons to sue out writs of subpœna against those that may give them cause of complaint, and counsel shall be appointed them, taking nothing for the same, at the discretion of the chancellor. The prices of labour were again regulated by the same parliament.

In the 6th year of Henry the VIIIth, the wages of servants, in husbandry, are again regulated, as are the hours they shall work, have for their meals, and sleep; and, by the twenty-second of the same reign, justices of the peace are empowered to licence, under their seals, such poor, aged, and impotent persons, to beg within a certain precinct, as they shall think to have most need; and if any beg, without such licence, he shall be whipped, or else set in the stocks; and a vagabond taken begging shall be whipped, and then sworn to return to the place where he was born, or last dwelt, for the space of three years, and there put himself to labour.

All the other parliamentary regulations which respect the poor labourers, between the interval of this last-mentioned act and those of the 28th and the 31st years of the same reign; the first of which vested the smaller monasteries, and the last dissolved the whole structure of, monastic institution, and vested all their estates in the crown; may be found in a capitular of statute 27th, Henry VIII. cap. 25, which directed, that all governors of shires, cities, hamlets, parishes, &c. shall find and keep every aged, poor, and impotent person, who was born or dwelt three years within the same limit, by way of voluntary and charitable alms, in every of the same cities, parishes, &c. with such convenient alms as shall be thought meet by their discretion, so as none of them shall be compelled to go openly begging: and also shall compel every sturdy vagabond to be kept in continual labour. Children under

14 years of age, and above five, that live in idleness, and are taken begging, may be put to service by the governors of cities, towns, &c. to husbandry, or other crafts or labours. A vagabond shall, the first time, be whipped, and sent to the place where he was born, or last dwelled, by the space of three years, there to get his living; and, if he continue his roguish life, he shall have the upper part of the gristle of his right ear cut off; and if, after that, he is taken wandering in idleness, or doth not apply to his labour, or is not in service with any master, he shall be adjudged and executed as a felon. No person shall make any open or common dole, nor shall give any money in alms, but to the common boxes and common gatherings, in every parish, on pain of forfeiting ten times as much. Unlawful games are also prohibited.

These, as far as they respect the subject of this inquiry, are the leading points, in which the legislature of other times interfered in the regulations of the rights, claims, and conduct, of that class of the community, whose only property is their personal strength, and whose sole employment through life is hard labour: but there also existed a description of fellow-subjects, whose rights were still more circumscribed, and the existence of which class of men in this island is, much to the honour of the present age, proved at this day only by the page of history, and such notices as are preserved in the black-lettered law-books of past times.

They were called villains. The word has respect to the nature of the tenure and the locality of their services, rather than to any particular ideas of disgrace which were attached to their person; *villani quia villa adscripti*, says Lord Coke: they were in some instances the property of the lord, were transferred like other property, and that particular description of them, called villains in gross, were in many respects in a similar situation to those Africans, who are objects of our commerce, and transported to the West Indies; but it appears, from Littleton's Tenures, that their personal safety was guarded, and no instances are to be found where they were ex-
empted

empted from the general benefit of the laws of their country, unless where the laws and customs, of a particular tenure, interfered, and reduced them, in those instances, almost to a state of slavery. It may be presumed, therefore, that in all other respects they had an equal claim, with the rest of our fellow-subjects, to a compensation for their labour, while they were able to do any; and, when they were incapacitated, they then claimed from the hand of charity equally with their neighbours.

L E T T E R V.

AT this period, so interesting to the feelings of all English Protestants, when that vast superstructure of Papal influence and grandeur, reared on the foundation of fear and superstition, which had existed so many centuries, fell, as it were, by the magic touch of Henry VIII. to the ground, and an edifice more consonant to the principles of sober piety and good sense arose in its stead; let us pause awhile, and reflect on the different situations the poor were in, both with respect to their wants and demands on society *then*, and that station which they *now* hold: the contrast will appear striking, and some useful reflections may arise from it.

Their wages had uniformly hitherto borne a proportion to the necessities of life; and, that such proportion might be preserved, independent of the capricious or selfish will of an interested master, and the imposing demands of sturdy laziness, the price of labour had frequently been regulated by the legislature, which had also paid a constant attention to the prices of provisions; and all the necessities of life had been attainable hitherto, throughout the whole period which has been subject to our review, (except

in times of casual dearth,) by a proportion of labour which left a surplus for accidents or illness; but, at the same time that the legislature had this equitable attention to their interests, it enforced the necessity of labour and employment, by corporal punishments of the idle and wanderer, and by restraining the hand of charity from giving persons of such description any assistance.

Through the same æra we also find that the infirm, the aged, and the impotent, had no claims of assistance from society, except on that portion of the possessions of the ecclesiastics which seems to have been adequate, under the management of the clergy, to the demand on it; and the jealousy of the legislature, lest the attempt made by the monasteries on that fund, by the appropriation of the great tithes to themselves, might, in the end, divert it from its proper application, is very apparent, by that act of parliament which passed in the 15th of Richard II. and was confirmed by the 4th of Henry IV.

Another circumstance well deserves our notice: — the luxuries of life were hitherto but little, if at all, in use among the poor; no deleterious snuff or tobacco, no debilitating tea, no liquid fire, commonly called gin, or spirits; those banes of health and morals, those sure destroyers of the constitutions of the present and of the rising generations; and it is late in the period that we find any mention made of ale-houses, receptacles of vice and immorality! from whence the Treasury draws a considerable revenue, and at the same time drains the poor of their property, constitution, and morals.

Manufactures had also made but little progress among us, which, however they may enrich individuals, or increase the sources of our commerce, are, to the labouring poor, when they are the means of congregating them to work in parties, or are introductory of sedentary employment, most serious evils; in as much as they are by long experience found to affect, most materially, the health and morals of those employed in them; and when, which has happened

pened in many places, they leave the parishes which have, for a time, been their residence, (for, manufactures are naturally desultory,) those parishes are left in miserable poverty and hapless wretchedness.

The means of intercourse with popular cities were also less obvious; of consequence, all those crimes, which, being committed in a crowd, may escape censure, were less practised; and that evil example, which is always to be found where many idle people are assembled, was less before their eyes; besides, the moral conduct of the individual was more under the guidance of the ecclesiastical director of his conscience, during the existence of the Roman Catholic persuasion; which circumstance must be allowed to have been a cause of stricter moral conduct among the poor than at present prevails.

It has been already hinted, that the population of the kingdom, particularly among the lower classes of society, has considerably increased since the abolition of monasteries; and that whatever alms the poor then received from those societies of regular clergy, as well as the crumbs which fell from the tables of the opulent, who now expend their incomes in cities and places of public resort, are at present withdrawn; and the very numerous poor of this kingdom are, now, left a very heavy burthen on the landed property alone, while manufactures and commerce enjoy a considerable portion of the benefit arising from their labour.

At the same time, a principle destructive to the rights, and particularly affecting the lower classes of society, seems now to pervade the whole system of the management of the poor; a principle which is inherent to despotic governments, but clashes with the rights of a subject under a limited monarchy, and which has, nevertheless, increased in this country in a direct proportion with the liberality and freedom of our excellent constitution. The principle alluded to is that which leaves a chasm between the different orders of the state, and operates to this effect: that those who are born to hard

labour for their maintenance shall never have an opportunity of emerging from their low condition; the artizan or manufacturer, the farmer or tradesman, may rise to the consequence of a legislator: opulence will raise the possessor to distinctions in society; an individual of every profession may look up with the well-grounded hope of becoming, in maturer age, of more importance among the higher classes of the state than when he began his career; but between the labourer and any superior situation among his countrymen there is now a dreadful gulph, which none, or scarce any, can pass. — During the æra which has been examined, such a principle does not appear to have prevailed, and yet the rights of the subject were not then so well defined as at present; the wages received, under sanction of statute-laws, by the labourer, enabled the prudent to save something; that something might *then* be applied to profit, in small occupations of land; a small business leads the way to a greater: — by these means the door was open to riches and authority; and honest ambition was a spur even to the cottager, of which he is now deprived; for, the industrious man in these days seldom receives any assistance from the overseer, in the casualties to which human nature is subject, until every farthing of his savings is exhausted, and he becomes, with respect to his poverty, on a level with the idle and the drunkard; and if he is fortunate enough, by many years industry and economy, to accumulate a few pounds, no small business, in his line of life, is now open to him; the consolidation of small farms has precluded all hopes of employing his money in that business with which he has had most experience; all, therefore, he can do is to buy a cottage, which the parish-officers too often fix their attention on, as a sufficient reason why he and his family, numerous as they may be, shall not receive relief, because he has visible property. This chasm between the labourer and the other classes in society, it is presumed, may do more mischief to the state, by destroying every stimulus to industry, except dire necessity, and actually become a more serious cause of
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the surprising increase of the poor's rates than even those inducements to dissipation and enervating luxury, which the policy of finance holds out to them in the shape of tea, spirits, and ale-houses.

No wonder, therefore, that those who lead a life of retirement, far from the haunts of the ambitious or voluptuous, who retreat from business or pleasure, either to cultivate a more intimate knowledge of themselves or to deceive the passing hours by an attention to the improvement or embellishment of their estates, should have their sensibility wounded by being not only hearers, but eye-witnesses, of the misery of their fellow-creatures. — No wonder that those who have been nursed in the lap of luxury should avoid those scenes which otherwise, it is probable, they would embellish by their taste; and desert those mansions, now untenanted and dreary, which, when occupied by the hospitable owners, diffused a gleam of cheerfulness through the country. It surely is not beneath the office of humanity, at times, to hold conversation with the peasant, whose labour improves or embellishes our demesnes; but the topic of such conversation too often distresses humanity, and sends the hearer home dejected and dissatisfied.

Probably some reflections may then arise in his mind not very favourable to the present system of poor-laws: being a witness of their wretched situation, he may reasonably conclude that the sum, immense as it is, which the poor's rate, together with the charitable donations of our ancestors, raises for them, is not sufficient, or that it is much misapplied; for the rate itself is certainly an enormous burthen, rising from two or three shillings in the pound, upon the actual rental, up to sixteen, eighteen, or more, in some parishes; and the whole of this revenue has increased to the present bulk, from nothing, in less than two centuries, and no part of it is mortgaged, but the whole applied, or presumed to be applied, to their maintenance and relief.

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Their wages, it is true, are less in proportion to the value of money or the necessaries of life, than they were in times antecedent to the present system, probably less by one-third; and they also, in those times, received assistance from the clergy, who, by their advice, then regulated their religious and moral principles, which are considerable preservers of industry and good economy; therefore, raising their wages would not alone be of service to them at present, because the religious sentiment seems extinct throughout the multitude in general, and morality has unawares expired with it; consequently those principles, which, if active, would kindle a spark of honest industry among them, are totally inert; and additional wages, it is feared, would only induce additional excesses.

If education will fix habits unconnected with the moral sentiment; if Mr. Pope's maxim is true, that

Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclin'd;

an opening is surely left which may be applied to the best of purposes, without raising the wages of the labourer, without calling for assistance from the clerical possessions, or expecting the clergy to attempt again the office of ghostly directors with respect to their poor parishioners.

Industry, early industry, keeps the rising age from present mischief, and fashions the future man to a life of honesty; and, depend on it, the religious principle, together with every respected moral virtue, may be reared on the basis of habitual industry.

"To teach the young idea how to shoot" is among the most pleasing and important offices of life; how excellent must be a plan formed on that sentiment, which would comprehend, and, in a manner, insure, the future well-being of so large a portion of this nation; would deliver them from a childhood and youth, passed in idleness and theft, to a manhood formed from the earliest years to habits of industry; would, in the mean time, render their

their hours of some value to their parents, which are now an incumbrance to them, and a pest to their neighbours.

Much has been done, it may be said, for the rising generation within these few years, by Sunday-schools; it is very far from my intention to call in question either the principle on which the patrons of Sunday-schools proceed, or to dispute the fact that they have done service; but, as the intention of Sunday-schools is to inculcate a religious principle, to give early habits of religious duties, and to open the mind of the poor to religious instruction, surely those seminaries are at present incomplete. Shall the six days be spent in idleness, perhaps in theft and immorality, while the seventh alone is taken care of? May not the child who is left to itself in a state of idleness, or, possibly, for so we know it too often happens, sent out to steal firing for its parents, or encouraged to pilfer for its sustenance through the other six days in the week, and who attends at the Sunday-schools, where, from superior readiness and regularity of attendance there, and at church, it is praised by the master or mistress for reading and behaving well on the Sunday; may not such a child, from such practice, imbibe habits of hypocrisy, at the same time that it is educated in a regular attendance to religious duties? Surely there is some danger that he may, in mature life, make use of this church-going habit, as a cloak for his conduct the rest of the week; besides, it should be considered that the accomplishments of reading and writing are not essentially necessary for all people; there must always be in all societies of mankind some who are hewers of wood and drawers of waters; to whose sum of happiness, or honest means of getting their bread, these accomplishments will not add an unit; and to all the children of that class in society, for whose benefit Sunday-schools have been with so much well-meaning humanity encouraged; six days industrious habits are recommended as a better preparation to a seventh of religious duties and instruction, than six days passed in vice or idleness. But this topic shall be dropped for the present,
and

and the utility of Sunday-schools acknowledged on this general principle,

Est quodam prodire tenus, si non detur ultra.

In the mean time, the inquiry into the actual state and situation of the poor, as far as they are affected by the prevailing habits of the times, as well as by the laws of their country; together with the opinion which those who have paid any attention to the subject, and have laid the result of that attention before the public, have formed of the causes of their increasing wretchedness and our increasing expenses; shall be pursued, from the period at which this pause has been made, through the succeeding years to the present time; in full confidence that some useful knowledge on this important subject may be gained; and in hopes that while we are amused we may be instructed.

L E T T E R VI.

WHEN I sent you the last letter on this subject, the difficulty of meeting with sufficient information in respect to the price of labour, and the necessaries of life, from the period which has hitherto been the object of this inquiry, unto the end of the reign of Elizabeth, did not then occur to me; nor did I foresee that I should be left in the dark on that subject, when Fleetwood's *Chronicon* ceased to give me any longer its steady and faithful light. The record of the prices of wheat at Windfor-market, which has been regularly taken by the Bursar of Eton-College to fix the corn-rents for the year, is the only exact account, so far back as it goes, in this kingdom; and that extends only to the year 1595; but, not being able to accompany the price

price of wheat from that period, which was only nine years anterior to the 43d of Elizabeth, with any certain cotemporary account of the price of labour; although I have taken every means in my power to obtain such information as might be depended on with respect to the concurrent price of labour and provisions to the 43d year of Elizabeth, hitherto without effect; and being fearful that those among your readers, who have paid any attention to what has already been said on the subject, may conceive it is deserted, and my word not intended to be kept with them; I determined to send you a few pages on that part of the inquiry, which my library will enable me to elucidate, and my reason is adequate to explain.

On perusing the English historians of the age antecedent to that when the parliament of Elizabeth interwove the preservation of the poor with the constitution of the kingdom; the assertion, made in a former part of this tract, that the monks, if they could not dig, were not ashamed to beg, is found to be well authorized by history; for, it appears that the multitudes of idle people, which the dissolved monasteries had vomited forth on the public, were become a serious burthen on society, and occasioned the passing an act in the first parliament of Edward the Sixth, which is as curious in the preamble, as it is inconsistent, in the enacting part, with every principle of humanity and justice: the preamble states, that “forasmuch as idleness and vagabondry is the mother and root of all thefts, robberies, evil acts, and other mischiefs, and yet idle and disorderly persons, being unprofitable members, or rather enemies, of the commonwealth, have been suffered to increase, and yet do so, whom if they should be punished with *death*, whipping, imprisonment, and other corporal pain, it were not without their deserts,” be it enacted, &c.

In short, this curious piece of legislation makes a man who liveth idly three days, the slave for two years of him who informs against such an idler, he being first branded with a red-hot iron

on the breast with the letter V ; during which two years he shall be fed with bread and water, and *refuse*-meat, and caused to work by beating, chaining, and otherwise, in any work, be it ever so vile ; and, if he runs away from his master for the space of fourteen days, he shall become his *slave* for life ; after being branded on the cheek with the letter S ; and, if he runs away a second time, he shall be adjudged a felon.

This act of parliament, so discreditable even to that age of disorder and despotism, arose, as Rapin says, from the necessity the government experienced of obliging the monks to work, who were little inured to labour, but employed themselves in going from house to house, inspiring people with the spirit of rebellion ; and thus much is certain, let the cause of such severity have been what it may, that the act itself was so diametrically opposite to every just principle of legislation, that it was repealed in the third year of the same reign, and during the administration of those by whose authority it had been passed ; and the poor were then left by the legislature much in the same situation as before the abolition of monasteries ; although certainly deprived of a source of maintenance, and the number of them considerably increased by that dissolution.

Those to whom Henry the Eighth had left the care of his infant son, even when assisted by the council, among whom many names of respectable memory appear, seem to have been as insufficient to that department of government, which respects the interior police of the kingdom, as we may reasonably suppose the minor king could have been, had he himself wielded the sceptre. What else but complete ignorance could have induced them to permit so unpopular and unjust an act to be passed in the first year of their young sovereign's reign, as has been alluded to ? which law they were so soon obliged to repeal ; and, in the year following, the repeal, as an encouragement (as the preamble says) to, and promotion of, industry, an act was passed which obliged servants in husbandry

husbandry to serve the whole year, and not by days' wages ; the occasion of which curious restraint, it is difficult at this distance of time to guess ; the statute-book, as well as history, being silent on the subject.

That the poor were now in a distressed situation throughout the kingdom, is very apparent ; they had lost such relief, whatever it might have been, as they had been accustomed to receive from the monasteries ; they had also lost a considerable source of employment, by the lands of the monasteries being granted to the nobles and followers of the court ; who left the husbandry of their newly-acquired domains to chance and neglect, which had been more attended to, and well cultivated, when under the inspection of the monasteries, and their tenants ; and those also, who were lately their confessors and spiritual directors, who, while it was their interest, influenced the poor to a life of industry and content, still retained the same influence over their minds, and made use of it now, to incite them to faction and sedition ; certain consequences of that distress, which arises from idleness and dissipation ; while the legislature, to mitigate and allay the turbulent and dissatisfied spirit then prevalent among the lower orders of the state, with an absurdity scarcely credible, passed a law, that the poor of every parish shall be relieved, “ with that which every parishioner of his charitable devotion *will give*.” 5th and 6th Edward VI. cap. 2.

As a top to the climax of their absurdities in legislating for the poor, during this short and unpropitious reign, parliament first instituted licensed ale-houses, and sanctioned them by an act which has the following preamble, as a reason for the statute : “ Forasmuch as intolerable hurts and troubles to the commonwealth of this realm doth daily grow and increase, through such abuses and disorders as are had in common ale-houses, and other houses, called tippling-houses.” A preamble which should have preceded a prohibition, not a license, or permission.

The short reign of Mary was passed in the regulation of what appeared to her, and her advisers, of much more importance than the feeding of millions; the bending the stubborn opinions of a few, in matters of religious controversy.—And, can it be supposed, that either legislators or ecclesiastics, who were employed in bringing heretics to the stake, could elevate their attention to the divine office of investigating the means to preserve the multitudes of their poor brethren from idleness and want? However, before all the perverted faculties of their minds were totally absorbed in the task of regulating matters of religious opinion, with the accuracy that their cotemporary legislator, Charles the Fifth,* regulated the motion of time-keepers, they had sufficient leisure to leave matters in the same state, with respect to the poor, as they were in the two last reigns; except that they invented the scheme of exposing those who begged; which, at that time, must, of necessity, have been as well the aged and infirm, as the idle; by obliging them to wear a badge on their breast and back openly, by an act of the second year of the reign of Philip and Mary; but, in these days, when the rights of human nature are so well understood, and, with such merited success, wrested from the strongest gripe of power, it will not strike us with surprise, that, in those times of ignorance, superstition, and despotism, the rights of the many should be but little understood, and less attended to, by the few who held the iron rod of power.

The kingdom felt, during the reigns of these two children of the Eighth Henry, most serious effects from the ignorance of government in, or its inattention to, the regulation of the interior police; being, at times, convulsed by intestine commotions, from its centre to its circumference; as the rebellions of Kett, in Norfolk; that of Arundel, in Devonshire; and insurrections in many

* Robinson's History of the Emperor Charles V. 4to edit. vol. iii. book 12.

counties,

counties, in the year 1549; and those of Wyatt, in Kent and Surrey, and Carew, in Cornwall, in 1554, plainly evidence.

It is no wonder, therefore, that in an early part of the reign of Elizabeth, after the affairs of religion were settled to the general satisfaction of the nation, by the establishment of the Protestant faith, according to the ritual of the church of England; and soon after the Queen had entrusted the affairs of the kingdom to the management of a Bacon and a Cecil; that we find the attention of parliament occupied on the subject of the poor, with a seriousness of application that proved their conception of the importance of the object to the universal welfare of the nation; and which gave rise to three acts, that were passed in the fifth year of her reign; by the first of which, those regulations made in the several parliaments of the fourth of Henry the Seventh, and the seventh and twenty-seventh of Henry the Eighth, for keeping in repair farm-houses, and maintaining of tillage, were enforced; and all that was enacted, during the last two reigns, on this subject, was repealed. By the second act, the poor were to be relieved by what every person gives weekly; and, if any parishioner shall refuse to pay, reasonably, towards the relief of the poor, or shall discourage others, then the justices of the peace, at their quarter-sessions, may tax him a weekly sum; which, if he refuses to pay, they may commit him to prison: and, if any parish has more poor than they are able to relieve, justices of the peace may license so many of them, as they shall think good, to beg within the county.

The next act, which is the 5th of Elizabeth, cap. 4. is in force at this day; and produces many useful regulations, as well in respect to what persons are compellable to serve in any crafts or trades, as in husbandry: the conduct of the master and servant, reciprocally to each other, is regulated; the production of testimonials of a servant's conduct enforced by a penalty; the time during which labourers

labourers shall continue at work ; besides many other heads of regulation ; for all which, it is better to refer your readers to that excellent compendium, Burn's Justice, or to the statute itself, than take up their time, or my own, in recapitulating its contents.— One section, however, I must call forth to their notice : the wages of servants, labourers, and artificers, as well by the day as year, shall be limited, rated, and appointed, by the justices of the peace of the county, they having respect to the plenty, or scarcity, of the times, &c. : and this section is enforced by a penalty on the justices, for not attending at the time required by the act ; and also on the master for giving, and the servant for taking, more than such rated wages.— Sect. 15.

The wisdom and humanity of government, during this long and prosperous reign, engrafted, by degrees, some of the best moral principles of the Christian religion into the statute-law of the land. Our Saviour, in his conversations with his disciples, lays very great stress on the duty of giving to the poor, administering to the sick, and relieving the prisoner ; as may be seen in the 25th chapter of Matthew, and many other places in the New Testament : and the parliament of Elizabeth sanctioned that, which was before only a moral duty, by a law of the state ; for, by the 14th of Elizabeth, cap. 5. assessments are directed to be made of the parishioners of every parish, for the relief of the poor of the same parish ; and a provision is also made for the relief of the prisoners in common gaols. The mode, also, of treating that class, or description, of our fellow-creatures, called, by the law, vagabonds, seemed also much better understood than in former reigns ; but still was tinged with too much severity, against those members of society, who are guilty of a negative offence only,—that of want of industry ; which, in fact, punishes itself ; and is, with justice, punished by the municipal laws ; as it is certainly a crime, and so considered by one of the best writers on that subject this age has produced—
Beccaria ;

Beccaria;* who, in his excellent treatise, *Dei Delitti e delle Pene*, exactly describes those useless, and culpable, members of society, under the title of *oziosi*, whom we include by the word *vagabonds*; and indicates an opinion, that their offence to society is somewhat similar to that of men who are probably guilty of crimes, but against whom there is no certain positive proof. This statute of Elizabeth orders vagabonds to be grievously whipped, and burned through the gristle of the right ear, for the first offence, if above fourteen years of age, unless some creditable person will take them into service for a year; and, if of eighteen years of age, and he falls again into a roguish life, he shall suffer death as a felon, unless some creditable person will take him into service for two years; and, if he falls a third time into a roguish life, he shall be adjudged a felon.

Government, after experiencing the effects arising from what had been done in the fourteenth year of this reign, again took up the subject; and we find, in the eighteenth statute, the first idea of natural children being maintained at the expense of their mother, or reputed father, who appear before this time to have been maintained at the expense of the parish; or, at least, there was no positive law of the state enforcing the contrary. This statute also provides for the punishment of the father and mother; and has stood the test of time, being the rule for the conduct of magistrates at this day.

In this parliament, also, arose the first idea of providing a stock to set the poor at work. Indeed, it is scarcely credible, that legislators should, for centuries, have punished *idleness* and *vagabondry* so severely, and not have provided a certainty, that those members of society, who, from their situation, are strongly tempted to incur the crime, should have the means put in their power, by industry, of avoiding it.

* Beccaria dei Delitti e delle Pene, sect. 24.

Houses of industry are now mentioned, for the first time; and lands in socage are permitted, during twenty years, to be given towards their maintenance, and to provide stock for the poor to work up. But what principle could induce the parliament to prohibit building cottages, unless four acres of land were laid to each of them, it is impossible at this distance of time to tell; the history of that period taking no notice of the subject; and the preamble to the act itself stating only general inconvenience; yet such a regulation passed into a law, in 1589; together with a prohibition against more families, or households, than one, inhabiting the same cottage.

The parliament of this wise and happy æra were as progressive in improving the situation of the poor, and in laws replete with tenderness and humanity, affecting the lower classes of the state, as were the parliaments under the two preceding reigns retrogressive and deficient in those respects. In the thirty-fifth year of Elizabeth, we find them turning again their attention to husbandry, and repealing several former statutes affecting it; repealing, also, that part of the statute-law respecting vagabonds, which retained any unnecessary, and therefore improper, severity; regulating the management of those poor and impotent persons, who are compelled to live by alms; and enlarging the term, during which it should be lawful to give land towards the maintenance of houses of correction, or of the poor: and, after having tried, for four years, the effect of all the laws then in force, relative to this important department of the police, and having called, as it were, practical experience, in aid of theoretic legislation; we find, towards the end of the sixteenth century, and in the beginning of the thirty-ninth year of this reign, these various matters and important regulations taking somewhat the appearance of a code or system of laws, as they were contained in the first six and the seventeenth chapters of this session.

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A recapitulation of the heads of these several statutes would be tedious, and is unnecessary to the purpose of this tract; which is intended to inquire into the relative situation of the poor, in time past, and at present: but one circumstance, on the revival of the history of these statutes, strikes the mind strongly; that the 43d of Elizabeth, which is considered by many as the fountain and origin of the poor's rate, is in fact not so, but is the result of the collected wisdom, observation, and experience, of the same, or nearly the same, individual statesmen; and those, men of acknowledged wisdom and prudence, attending to the same object, the general good of society, in this most important article of police, during the term of almost half a century.

Although some sensible and enlightened minds have appeared to doubt, whether this statute has, in its present consequences, brought upon that portion of society, which, by the law of the land, is subject to its influence, more good than evil; reasoning from the great burthen it imposes on the landed interest in particular; the knowledge also that in other countries no such law subsists; that until a certain æra it was not the law here; till when no collections, but such as are voluntary, were gathered for the poor; knowing withal, that misery and distress, arising from poverty, are the lot of too many; although such an immense revenue is raised for their relief: yet so great was the necessity of raising a certain revenue for them, and so gradually and strongly did such necessity enforce itself through the period which has just been subject to our attention, by a kind of divine right, on the conscience of the legislature, who disputed and yielded, step by step, to its powerful energy, during a long reign; which all our historians teach us to remember with reverence, for the wisdom and prudence so visibly prevalent throughout that age; this assertion may now be ventured, that a tax upon society, for the relief of the poor, was, in the age of Elizabeth, expedient and necessary; and that the regulations of the 43d statute of her reign were then the best mo-

dification of such a tax, and well calculated to enforce habits of industry, and all those exertions to maintain themselves before they became a burthen upon their fellow-subjects, which fell within the scope of their power and ability: whether they are so now, and whether the present enormous burthen of the poor's rates arises from this statute being put in force, or from other causes, shall be the object of a subsequent investigation.

L E T T E R VII.

TO form an accurate judgement on any subject, it is necessary that the mind should have been as fully attentive to the design of each part and proportion in detail as to the spirit and effect of the whole; the fly on the dome of St. Paul's might, with equal reason, be supposed able to form a sensible and critical opinion of that magnificent fabric, as the mind of that man be conceived equal to form an adequate conception of the intent of the legislature in the statute alluded to, who has only read detached parts of it, or hastily, from the practice of modern days, formed a conception of the spirit and intentions which impressed the parliament when it became the law of the land, in the beginning of the last century.

It is necessary, therefore, in some part of this inquiry, to declare what was the intent of the legislature when they passed this act; and to point out the means made use of by them to enforce the execution of that intent; or, in other words, to explain the spirit of this humane and wise code.

In the execution of this task, reference shall be made to the statute itself, as divided by its sections, that the reader may examine, if he thinks proper, how far the following abridgment
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is warranted by the words of the act itself;* which is here printed, as it cannot, I believe, be purchased singly, or unconnected with other matter; and Burn's Justice, which is in every body's hands,

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contains

* In consequence of some conversation with several gentlemen of the Royal and Antiquary Societies, who meet at a coffee-house in the Strand after those societies are broken up, and spend the evening together; I was induced, principally on the assertion of Mr. Godschell, (a worthy and very intelligent magistrate in the county of Surrey, who published, in 1787, a General Plan of Parochial and Provincial Police,) that Sir Edward Coke was the framer of the 43d Eliz. cap. 2, to search the Journals of the House of Lords and of the Commons of that time, but was not able either from them, or any other source of printed information in my power to search, to prove, with certainty, that we owe this act of parliament to the abilities of that great lawyer solely; that he, being at that time the Queen's attorney-general, might have perused and settled the act, is probable.

The Journals of the House of Commons unfortunately are imperfect at the period when this measure was in agitation in parliament, there being a chasm from the year 1580 to 1603.

In Sir Simon D'Ewe's Journal the following notices are found, 43d Eliz. 1601, November 5.

" Upon motion this day, a committee was appointed to consider of the statute for the relief of the poor, viz. Sir Robert Wroth, Mr. Phillips, Sir Edward Hobbie, Sir Francis Hastings, Sir George Moore, and others, who were appointed to meet on Thursday next in the Exchequer-Chamber, at two o'clock in the afternoon.

" December 10, P. M. The bill for the relief of the poor was read the second time, and committed to Mr. Comptroller, Sir Robert Wroth, Sir Francis D'Arcie, Mr. Francis Bacon, Mr. Lieutenant of the Tower, and others, who were appointed to meet to-morrow, in the afternoon, at two of the clock, in the Court of Words.

" December 11, P. M. Sir Robert Wroth, a committee in the bill for the relief of the poor, brought in the bill with amendments, and a proviso added by the committee.

" The provisos and amendments were read, and the bill ordered to be engrossed."

It appears that there was another bill brought into the House for avoiding idleness, and setting the poor to work. This was read the second time December 15, and, on the question for committing it for engrossing, was dashed.

JOURNALS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

1601. December 16. 1^{ma} *Vice lecta est Billa*, " An Act for the Relief of the Poor."

December 17. 2^{da} *Vice lecta est Billa*, " An Act for the Relief of the Poor."

Expedit. *Hodie*: 3^a *Vice lecta est Billa*, " An Act for the Relief of the Poor."

" *Ann.*

contains only detached parts of it; and it certainly is a statute which is intimately connected with the interests of all owners and occupiers

“ *Anno quadragesimo tertio Reginæ Elizabethæ.*

C A P. II.

“ *An Act for the Relief of the Poor.*

“ BE it enacted, by the authority of this present parliament, That the church-wardens of every parish, and four, three, or two, substantial householders there, as shall be thought meet, having respect to the proportion and greatness of the same parish and parishes, to be nominated yearly, in *Easter*-week, or within one month after *Easter*, under the hand and seal of two or more justices of the peace of the same county, whereof one to be of the *quorum*, dwelling in or near the same parish or division where the same parish doth lie, shall be called overseers of the poor of the same parish: and they, or the greater part of them, shall take order from time to time, by and with the consent of two or more such justices of the peace as is aforesaid, for setting to work the children of all such whose parents shall not, by the said church-wardens and overseers, or the greater part of them, be thought able to keep and maintain their children; and also for setting to work all such persons, married or unmarried, having no means to maintain them, and use no ordinary and daily trade of life to get their living by: and also to raise, weekly or otherwise, (by taxation of every inhabitant, parson, vicar, and other, and of every occupier of lands, houses, tithes impropriate, appropriations of tithes, coal-mines, or saleable underwoods, in the said parish, in such competent sum and sums of money as they shall think fit,) a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other necessary ware and stuff, to set the poor on work: and also competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other among them, being poor, and not able to work: and also for the putting out of such children to be apprentices, to be gathered out of the same parish, according to the ability of the same parish, and to do and execute all other things, as well for the disposing of the said stock as otherwise, concerning the premises, as to them shall seem convenient.

II. “ Which said church-wardens and overseers, so to be nominated, or such of them as shall not be let by sickness, or other just excuse, to be allowed by two such justices of peace or more as is aforesaid, shall meet together, at the least once every month in the church of the said parish, upon the *Sunday*, in the afternoon, after divine service, there to consider of some good course to be taken, and of some meet order to be set down in the premises; and shall, within four days after the end of their year, and after other overseers nominated as aforesaid, make and yield up to such two justices of peace as is aforesaid, a true and perfect account of all sums of money by them received, or rated and assessed and not received, and also of such stock as shall be in their hands, or in the hands of

occupiers of land and houses, and, in fact, with the best interests of the whole kingdom.

It

of any of the poor to work, and of all other things concerning their said office; and such sum or sums of money as shall be in their hands, shall pay and deliver over to the said church-wardens and overseers newly nominated and appointed as aforesaid; upon pain that every one of them absenting themselves without lawful cause as aforesaid, from such monthly meeting for the purpose aforesaid, or being negligent in their office, or in the execution of the orders aforesaid, being made by and with the assent of the said justices of peace, or any two of them before-mentioned, to forfeit, for every such default of absence or negligence, twenty shillings.

III. "And be it also enacted, That if the said justices of peace do perceive that the inhabitants of any parish are not able to levy among themselves sufficient sums of money for the purposes aforesaid; that then the said two justices shall and may tax, rate, and assess, as aforesaid, any other of other parishes, or out of any parish, within the hundred where the said parish is, to pay such sum and sums of money to the church-wardens and overseers of the said poor parish for the said purposes, as the said justices shall think fit, according to the intent of this law: and, if the said hundred shall not be thought to the said justices able and fit to relieve the said several parishes not able to provide for themselves as aforesaid; then the justices of peace, at their general quarter-sessions, or the greater number of them, shall rate and assess, as aforesaid, any other of other parishes, or out of any parish, within the said county, for the purposes aforesaid, as in their discretion shall seem fit.

IV. "And that it shall be lawful, as well for the present as subsequent church-wardens and overseers, or any of them, by warrant from any two such justices of peace, as is aforesaid, to levy as well the said sums of money, and all arrearages, of every one that shall refuse to contribute according as they shall be assessed, by distress and sale of the offender's goods, as the sums of money or stock which shall be behind upon any account to be made as aforesaid, rendering to the parties the overplus: and, in defect of such distress, it shall be lawful for any such two justices of the peace to commit him or them to the common gaol of the county, there to remain, without bail or mainprize, until payment of the said sum, arrearages, and stock: and the said justices of peace, or any one of them, to send, to the house of correction or common gaol, such as shall not employ themselves to work, being appointed thereunto, as aforesaid: and also any such two justices of peace to commit to the said prison every one of the said church-wardens and overseers which shall refuse to account; there to remain, without bail or mainprize, until he have made a true account, and satisfied and paid so much as upon the said account shall be remaining in his hands.

V. "And

It is remarkable that the statute opens without any preamble whatever: most acts of our parliament, in the preamble, give a summary

V. "And be it further enacted, That it shall be lawful for the said church-wardens and overseers, or the greater part of them, by the assent of any two justices of the peace aforesaid, to bind any such children, as aforesaid, to be apprentices, where they shall see convenient, till such man-child shall come to the age of four-and-twenty years, and such woman-child to the age of one-and-twenty years, or the time of her marriage; the same to be as effectual to all purposes, as if such child were of full age, and, by indenture of covenant, bound him or her self. And to the intent that necessary places of habitation may more conveniently be provided for such poor impotent people; be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for the said church-wardens and overseers, or the greater part of them, by the leave of the lord or lords of the manor, whereof any waste or common within their parish is or shall be parcel, and upon agreement before with him or them made, in writing, under the hands and seals of the said lord or lords, or otherwise, according to any order to be set down by the justices of peace of the said county, at their general quarter-sessions, or the greater part of them, by like leave and agreement of the said lord or lords, in writing, under his or their hands and seals, to erect, build, and set up, in fit and convenient places of habitation in such waste or common, at the general charges of the parish, or otherwise of the hundred or county, as aforesaid, to be taxed, rated, and gathered, in manner before expressed, convenient houses of dwelling for the said impotent poor; and also to place inmates, or more families than one, in one cottage or house; one act made in the one-and-thirtieth year of her Majesty's reign, intituled, *An Act against the erecting and maintaining of Cottages*, or any thing therein contained to the contrary notwithstanding: which cottages and places for inmates shall not, at any time after, be used or employed to or for any other habitation, but only for impotent and poor of the same parish, that shall be there placed from time to time by the church-wardens and overseers of the poor of the same parish, or the most part of them, upon the pains and forfeitures contained in the said former act made in the said one-and-thirtieth year of her Majesty's reign.

VI. "Provided always, That if any person or persons shall find themselves grieved with any sels or tax, or other act done by the said church-wardens and other persons, or by the said justices of peace; that then it shall be lawful for the justices of the peace, at their general quarter-sessions, or the greater number of them, to take such order therein, as to them shall be thought convenient; and the same to conclude and bind all the said parties.

VII. "And be it further enacted, That the father and grandfather, and the mother and grandmother, and the children of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent, person, or other poor person not able to work, being of a sufficient ability, shall, at their own charges,

summary view of the evils intended by the legislature to be corrected, or the good which is expected to ensue from the regulations to

charges, relieve and maintain every such poor person in that manner, and according to that rate, as by the justices of peace of that county where such sufficient persons dwell, or the greater number of them, at their general quarter-sessions, shall be assessed; upon pain that every one of them shall forfeit twenty shillings for every month which they shall fail therein.

VIII. " And be it further hereby enacted, That the mayors, bailiffs, or other head-officers, of every town and place, corporate and city, within this realm, being justice or justices of peace, shall have the same authority by virtue of this act, within the limits and precincts of their jurisdictions, as well out of sessions as at their sessions, if they hold any, as is herein limited, prescribed, and appointed, to justices of the peace of the county, or any two or more of them, or to the justices of peace, in their quarter-sessions, to do and execute for all the uses and purposes in this act prescribed, and no other justice or justices of peace to enter or meddle there: and that every alderman of the city of *London*, within his ward, shall and may do and execute, in every respect, so much as is appointed and allowed by this act to be done and executed by one or two justices of peace of any county within this realm.

IX. " And be it also enacted, That if it shall happen any parish to extend itself into more counties than one, or part to lie within the liberties of any city, town, or place corporate, and part without, that then as well the justices of peace of every county as also the head-officers of such city, town, or place corporate, shall deal and intermeddle only in so much of the said parish as lieth within their liberties, and not any further: and every of them respectively within their several limits, wards, and jurisdictions, to execute the ordinances before-mentioned concerning the nomination of overseers, the consent to binding apprentices, the giving warrant to levy taxations unpaid, the taking account of church-wardens and overseers, and the committing to prison such as refuse to account, or deny to pay the arrearages due upon their accounts; and yet, nevertheless, the said church-wardens and overseers, or the most part of them, of the said parishes that do extend into such several limits and jurisdictions, shall, without dividing themselves, duly execute their office in all places within the said parish, in all things to them belonging, and shall duly exhibit and make one account before the said head-officer of the town or place corporate, and one other before the said justices of peace, or any such two of them, as is aforesaid.

X. " And further be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That if, in any place within this realm, there happen to be hereafter no such nomination of overseers yearly, as is before appointed, that then every justice of peace of the county, dwelling within the division where such default of nomination shall happen, and every mayor, alderman, and head-

to be enforced; but here is no preamble, unless the title can be called one, which is in so many words, “ An Act for the Relief of
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head-officer, of city, town, or place-corporate, where such default shall happen, shall lose and forfeit, for every such default, five pounds, to be employed towards the relief of the poor of the said parish, or place-corporate, and to be levied, as aforesaid, of their goods, by warrant from the general sessions of the peace of the said county, or of the same city, town, or place-corporate, if they keep sessions.

XI. “ And be it also enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That all penalties and forfeitures before-mentioned in this act, to be forfeited by any person or persons, shall go and be employed to the use of the poor of the same parish, and towards a stock and habitation for them, and other necessary uses and relief, as before in this act are mentioned and expressed: and shall be levied by the said church-wardens and overseers, or one of them, by warrant from any two such justices of peace, or mayor, alderman, or head-officer of city, town, or place-corporate, respectively, within their several limits, by distress and sale thereof, as aforesaid; or, in defect thereof, it shall be lawful for any two such justices of peace, and the said aldermen and head-officers, within their several limits, to commit the offender to the said prison, there to remain, without bail or mainprize, till the said forfeitures shall be satisfied and paid.

XII. “ And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That the justices of peace of every county or place-corporate, or the more part of them, in their general sessions to be holden next after the feast of *Easter* next, and so, yearly, as often as they shall think meet, shall rate every parish to such a weekly sum of money as they shall think convenient; so as no parish be rated above the sum of six-pence, nor under the sum of a half-penny, weekly to be paid, and so as the total sum of such taxation of the parishes, in every county, amount not above the rate of two-pence for every parish within the said county; which sums so taxed shall be yearly assessed by the agreement of the parishioners within themselves, or, in default thereof, by the church-wardens and petty constables of the same parish, or the more part of them; or, in default of their agreement, by the order of such justice or justices of peace as shall dwell in the same parish, or (if none be there dwelling) in the parts next adjoining.

XIII. “ And if any person shall refuse or neglect to pay any such portion of money so taxed, it shall be lawful for the said church-wardens and constables, or any of them, or, in their default, for any justice of peace of the said limit, to levy the same by distress and sale of the goods of the party so refusing or neglecting, rendering to the party the overplus; and, in default of such distress, it shall be lawful to any justice of that limit to commit such person to the said prison, there to abide, without bail or mainprize, till he have paid the same.

XIV. “ And

the Poor." The enacting part instantly commences. Industry, and principally early industry, is the first object under their contemplation :

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XIV. " And be it also enacted, That the said justices of peace at their general quarter-sessions, to be holden at the time of such taxation, shall set down what competent sums of money shall be sent quarterly out of every county or place-corporate, for the relief of the poor prisoners of the King's Bench and Marshalsea, and also of such hospitals and alms-houses as shall be in the said county, and what sums of money shall be sent to every one of the said hospitals and alms-houses, so as there be sent out of every county, yearly, twenty shillings, at the least, to each of the said prisons of the King's Bench and Marshalsea; which sums, ratably to be assessed upon every parish, the church-wardens of every parish shall truly collect, and pay over to the high-constables in whose division such parish shall be situate, from time to time, quarterly, ten days before the end of every quarter; and every such constable, at every such quarter-sessions in such county, shall pay over the same to two such treasurers, or to one of them, as shall, by the more part of the justices of peace of the county, be elected to be the said treasurers, to be chosen by the justices of peace of the said county, city, or town, or place-corporate, or of others which were assessed and taxed at five pounds lands, or ten pounds goods, at the least, at the tax of subsidy next before the time of the said election to be made; and the said treasurers so elected to continue for the space of one whole year in their office, and then to give up their charge, with a due account of their receipts and disbursements, at the quarter-sessions to be holden next after the feast of *Easter* in every year, to such others as shall, from year to year, in form aforesaid, successively be elected treasurers for the said county, city, town, or place-corporate; which said treasurers, or one of them, shall pay over the same to the Lord-Chief-Justice of *England*, and Knight-Marshal for the time being, equally to be divided to the use aforesaid, taking their acquittance for the same, or, in default of the said chief-justice, to the next antientest justice of the King's Bench, as aforesaid: and, if any church-warden or high-constable, or his executors or administrators, shall fail to make payment in form above specified, then every church-warden, his executors or administrators, so offending, shall forfeit, for every time, the sum of ten shillings; and every high-constable, his executors or administrators, shall forfeit, for every time, the sum of twenty shillings; the same forfeitures, together with the sums behind, to be levied by the said treasurer and treasurers, by way of distress and sale of the goods, as aforesaid, in form aforesaid, and by them to be employed towards the charitable uses comprised in this act.

XV. " And be it further enacted, That all the surplusage of money, which shall be remaining in the said stock of any county, shall, by discretion of the more part of the justices of peace, in their quarter-sessions, be ordered, distributed, and bestowed, for the relief of the poor hospitals of that county, and of those that shall sustain losses by fire,
water,

templation: the setting to work children, whose parents shall not be thought able to maintain them, and also the putting poor children

water, the sea, or other casualties, and to such other charitable purposes, for the relief of the poor, as to the more part of the said justices of peace shall seem convenient.

XVI. " And be it further enacted, That if any treasurer elected shall wilfully refuse to take upon him the said office of treasurerhip, or refuse to distribute and give relief, or to account, according to such form as shall be appointed by the more part of the said justices of peace; that then it shall be lawful for the justices of peace, in their quarter-sessions, or, in their default, for the justices of assize, at their assizes, to be holden in the same county, to fine the same treasurer by their discretion; the same fine not to be under three pounds, and to be levied by sale of his goods, and to be prosecuted by any two of the said justices of peace whom they shall authorize. Provided always, that this act shall not take effect until the feast of *Easter* next.

XVII. " And be it enacted, That the statute made in the nine-and-thirtieth year of her Majesty's reign, intituled, *An Act for the Relief of the Poor*, shall continue and stand in force until the feast of *Easter* next; and that all taxations heretofore imposed, and not paid, nor that shall be paid before the said feast of *Easter* next, and that all taxes hereafter, before the said feast, to be taxed by virtue of the said former act, which shall not be paid before the said feast of *Easter*, shall and may, after the said feast of *Easter*, be levied by the overseers, and other persons in this act, respectively appointed to levy taxations, by distress, and by such warrant, in every respect, as if they had been taxed and imposed by virtue of this act, and were not paid.

XVIII. " Provided always, That whereas the island of *Fowlness*, in the county of *Essex*, being environed with the sea, and having a chapel of ease for the inhabitants thereof, and yet the said island is no parish, but the lands in the same are situated within divers parishes far distant from the said island; be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that the said justices of peace shall nominate and appoint inhabitants within the said island, to be overseers for the poor people dwelling within the said island; and that both they, the said justices, and the said overseers, shall have the same power and authority to all intents, considerations, and purposes, for the execution of the parts and articles of this act, and shall be subject to the same pains and forfeitures, and likewise that the inhabitants and occupiers of lands there shall be liable and chargeable to the same payments, charges, expenses, and orders, in such manner and form as if the same island were a parish; in consideration whereof, neither the said inhabitants, or occupiers of land, within the said island, shall not be compelled to contribute towards the relief of the poor of those parishes, wherein their houses or lands which they occupy within the said island are situated, for or by reason of their said habitation or occupings, other than for the relief of the poor people within the said island, neither yet shall the other inhabitants of the parishes, wherein such houses or lands are

children out apprentice; setting the idle, whether from choice or necessity, to work; for which purpose a sum was to be raised by assessment, to purchase a stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other necessary ware and stuff:—the next consideration was to raise a competent sum of money, by the same means, for the necessary relief of the lame, old, impotent, blind, and such others as are poor, *and not able to work.* Sect. 1.

This intent was to be carried into execution by the churchwardens and overseers; which last were yearly to be appointed by the neighbouring magistrates, whose particular duty in this act is declared to be, to give order, direct, and inspect, the proceedings of the churchwardens and overseers; and that this plan may, in all its

are situated, be compelled, by reason of their resiancy or dwelling, to contribute to the relief of the poor inhabitants within the said island.

XIX. “And be it further enacted, That if any action, or trespass, or other suit, shall happen to be attempted and brought against any person or persons, for taking of any distress, making of any sale, or any other thing doing, by authority of this present act, the defendant or defendants, in any such action or suit, shall and may either plead not guilty, or otherwise make avowry, cognisance, or justification, for the taking of the said distresses, making of sale, or other thing doing, by virtue of this act, alleging, in such avowry, cognisance, or justification, that the said distress, sale, trespass, or other thing, whereof the plaintiff or plaintiffs complained, was done by authority of this act, and according to the tenor, purport, and effect, of this act, without any expressing or rehearsal of any other matter or circumstance contained in this present act: to which avowry, cognisance, or justification, the plaintiff shall be admitted to reply, that the defendant did take the said distress, made the said sale, or did any other act or trespass supposed in his declaration, of his own wrong, without any such cause alleged by the said defendant; whereupon the issue in every such action shall be joined, to be tried by verdict of twelve men, and not otherwise, as is accustomed in other personal actions; and, upon the trial of that issue, the whole matter to be given on both parties in evidence, according to the very truth of the same; and, after such issue tried for the defendant, or nonsuit of the plaintiff after appearance, the same defendant to recover treble damages, by reason of his wrongful vexation in that behalf, with his costs also in that part sustained, and that to be assessed by the same jury, or writ to inquire of the damages, as the same shall require.

XX. “Provided always, That this act shall endure no longer than to the end of the next session of parliament. 3 Car. I. c. 4. *Continued until the end of the first session of the next parliament, and further continued by 16 Car. I. c. 4.*”

parts, be carried by the overseers, under the direction of the justices, into execution, they are ordered to meet on this business, at least once in the month, on a Sunday, after divine service in the church; and, within four days after the year is expired, yield up to two justices an account of all things concerning their office. Provision is also made in those instances where parishes may not be able among themselves to levy the necessary sums of money, by calling in aid other parishes. Sect. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

That the expense for the relief of those who are poor, and not able to work, may be felt as little as possible by the community at large, parental and filial affection is compelled to do its duty before the public is burthened; and for that purpose grandfathers, fathers, and children, are reciprocally called forth to support each other if able. Sect. 7.

And, that necessary habitations may be provided for the poor and impotent, it is made lawful for the overseers, with leave of the lord of the manor, and under the control of the magistrates, to build convenient places of habitation on the waste, and to place inmates, or more families than one, in the same cottage or house; notwithstanding an act passed in the 30th year of the same reign, which has already been alluded to. Sect. 6.

Another object was, to raise a sum of money from every parish, by a weekly rate, not exceeding sixpence, or under two-pence, for the relief of the poor prisoners in the King's Bench and Marshalsea; and also such hospitals and alms-houses as shall be in each county; so as that there be sent out of every county yearly not less than twenty shillings to each of the said prisons; and the surplus-money shall, at the discretion of the justices of the peace, in their quarter-sessions, be distributed for the relief of the poor hospitals of the county; and of those who shall sustain losses by fire, water, the sea, or other casualties; and to such other purposes for the relief of the poor, as to the most part of the said justices shall seem convenient. Sect. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

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The island of Fowlness, in the county of Essex, being extra-parochial, it was thought necessary to include it by name; and the general regulations of the act are also extended to that island. Sect. 18.

The sanction by which the legislature has enforced their regulations principally rests in pecuniary penalties, to which all descriptions of persons, called on to the performance of any part of the act, are liable: these forfeitures rise from twenty shillings to five pounds, which is the penalty to which the magistrates are subject if they neglect to appoint overseers; and are directed to be applied in aid of the fund, which is ordered to be raised for the employment and relief of the poor. Sect. 2, 10, 11, 14, 16.

The summary mode of distress, by warrant, from two magistrates, enforces the payment of the assessments, and also of the penalties, except in the instances of the penalties incurred by the magistrates, and the treasurer of the county-stock, raised by virtue of Section 12, which are directed to be levied, by warrant, from general or quarter sessions. Sect. 4, 10, 13.

Imprisonment, in default of sufficient distress, is called in aid of the revenue thus to be raised for the benefit of the poor; and, also, as a punishment to those who shall not employ themselves, work being first found for them; and as a punishment to such overseers, as may refuse to give account; until their contumacy is overcome, and they have paid the arrears due. Sect. 4, 13.

An appeal is given to the quarter-sessions, to any person who shall find himself aggrieved by any cess or tax, or by any other act, done by the church-wardens, overseers, justices of the peace, or any other person. Sect. 6.

To enforce obedience in corporate towns and cities, the head-officers, within their jurisdictions, shall have the same authority as justices of the peace, within their respective counties; and, where parishes extend into two counties or liberties, the head-officers shall have

have authority only within their respective counties and liberties, and not farther. Sect. 8, 9.

It is declared at what time this act shall commence, and 39 Eliz. cap. 3. cease to be in force. Sect. 17.

Then follow directions for the defendant's plea, in any suit commenced against him on this statute; the replication of the plaintiff; the issue to be joined; and, on verdict for defendant, or nonsuit of plaintiff, treble damages and costs are given; the whole calculated to come easily at the real fact, and to protect those, who are employed under the act, from being molested by vexatious suits; and the act itself is intended to be experimental only, and declared to endure no longer than to the end of the next session of parliament. Sect. 19, 20.

These few preceding paragraphs contain a summary of the contents of this statute,—the basis of all future regulations with respect to the poor, their employment, and relief; and, to use the words of that excellent writer on the laws and constitution of this kingdom, the late Judge Blackstone, “the farther any subsequent plans for maintaining the poor have departed from this institution, the more impracticable, and even pernicious, their visionary attempts have proved:” nor could any thing short of prophecy have foretold, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, that, in consequence of these wise and humane regulations, above 3,000,000*l.* would, towards the close of the eighteenth century, be raised in England and Wales, for the relief of the poor, exclusive of numerous hospitals, largely endowed; charity-schools; annual value of landed estates, given to charitable purposes; sums of money at interest in the funds; charities, supported by voluntary contribution; private charities; the income of the whole, probably, not short of 5,000,000*l.* a year; and, after all, so much misery and distress, arising from extreme poverty, would then remain among us.

It

It surely must be obvious to the meanest capacity, after the most trifling attention to the great purpose of the legislature, in this act of parliament, that the burthen of the poor's rates, which is, with so much reason, complained of, and the present distressed situation of so many of the poor, *cannot arise from this statute being fully, and in every part of it, carried into strict execution, but from a practice totally the reverse.*—Nor can it be asserted, with truth or reason, that any one regulation contained in it is impracticable in these times, or that any one is impolitic, or dangerous to be executed, either to the individual executing it, the poor, who are the objects of it, or the nation at large, who are interested in the consequences arising from it.—Those sections which relate to the raising a sum of money, by assessments on the occupiers, are, most certainly, executed with all strictness: but the first great purpose of the money so raised,—*the purchasing stock to set to work those children whose parents are not able to maintain them, and, also, the idle, whether from choice or necessity,* is too much neglected: although there is no doubt but the habit of early industry once obtained, by an application of some part of the money thus raised; and, by these means, the poor being inured to an industrious way of life; would, of itself, amply compensate the parishes for the purchase of a stock of materials; although the manufactures thus fabricated might not meet with a ready sale, at a price which will allow of a computation for much profit.

It is a well-known fact, that considerable sums are expended in every parish, in the purchase of articles for the clothing of the poor, which are bought of the retail shop-keeper, in the country, at a fair average of thirty per cent. more than the prime cost of the materials and fabric to the manufacturer: in this article, therefore, a very great saving may be made, by employing the hands of children now in idleness, or mischief, in such a manufactory, as might comfortably and neatly, although coarsely, clothe their relations and themselves, at a much cheaper rate, with clo-
thing

thing which would wear much longer than what is now bought at the shops: in the mean time, the habit of industry would be obtained, and the first great object of this statute put in force, which now is almost generally neglected; and the clothing of the poor would form no inconsiderable source of consumption for those manufactures which might be produced by the early industry of their children.

L E T T E R VIII.

TO prove, in some degree, that the idea thrown out in the preceding letter is not founded in theory or vain speculation only, one experimental instance shall be given, too trifling, it is acknowledged, for the notice of the public, but much in point.

Having seen, in the summer of 1787, the good effects arising from the schools of industry, throughout the southern district of Lindsey, in the county of Lincoln, it determined me to try, on a very small scale, the experiment in my own parish; and, accordingly, in the winter of the same year, a person was persuaded to undertake the teaching six boys, of about the age of seven years, to spin what is called top-work, although it was desired the yarn might not be twisted so close as in that fabric, it being intended for knitting. A woman was also found to teach the same number of girls, of the same age, to knit stockings. Forty-two pounds of wool were bought at Bury for the experiment. The account, when manufactured, stood as follows:

Combed

	£.	s.	d.
Combed wool, 42lb. at 11 <i>d.</i> per lb. - -	1	18	6
Spinning ditto, by boys, at 4½ <i>d.</i> per lb. some deductions made for waste included - - -	0	14	3
Twisting and reeling 33 lb. 14oz. of yarn, at 2½ <i>d.</i> and 3 <i>d.</i> per lb. - - - -	0	8	0
Knitting 10lb. 12oz. at 1 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i> - - -	0	14	4
Ditto 23lb. 2oz. at 1 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> - - -	1	14	7½
	<hr/>		
Total expended - - -	5	9	8½
	<hr/>		
34 pair of children's stockings, and 43 pair of men's, weighing 33 lb. 14oz. sold to the work-house,	5	13	8
Ends of wool, 7lb. made into mops, at 4 <i>d.</i> per lb. 1 lb. 2oz. wasted and lost.	0	2	4
	<hr/>		
Total produce - - -	5	16	0
	<hr/>		
Profit - - - -	0	6	3½
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By which it appears, that a profit of above six shillings resulted from the experiment, in which only 5*l.* 9*s.* 8½*d.* was employed.

	£.	s.	d.
Six boys were taught to spin, nine weeks, and earned	0	14	3
Six girls learned to knit, 27 weeks, and earned -	2	8	11½

Supposing a capital of 5*l.* employed six months, in this infant manufactory, on which the clear profit was 6*s.* 3½*d.* (and five pounds is above the sum actually employed that length of time,) a profit of 20*l.* 19*s.* 5*d.* will arise on 100*l.* thus employed for one year; and one hundred and twenty boys, and an equal number of girls, will be industriously employed in learning an occupation:

some money will be earned for their parents, by honest industry ; and clothing, at a much cheaper rate than what is bought at the shops, will be manufactured for the poor ; for, it is presumed, that under proper management, no inconsiderable quantity of the yarn produced may be wove into a fabric which would make excellent, strong, and warm, clothing.

This experiment would have been continued ; but the man who taught the boys, and the woman who taught the girls, did not think so small a number worth their attention ; consequently, their scholars were neither regular in their attendance, or industrious while they did attend.

The salary paid to the master and mistress is not brought into the account ; because it is conceived, that the price given on so small a scale is not a rule on a large one ; and there is reason to believe, that the profits of such a manufactory will more than pay the salary to the instructors.

This idea of employing the children of the poor would extend itself, under good management, to other manufactures, besides those of wool ; why not to coarse linens ; and to shoes, for which the poor pay an extravagant price ?

If this be the case ; if so much good might probably arise from putting in execution the leading idea in this statute ; of employing the children of the poor ; which is an inconsiderable part only, of what was wisely enacted by our forefathers, and foolishly neglected by ourselves, it surely, to those who complain of the burthen of the poor's rates, and, at the same time, neglect to execute the laws for promoting industry among the poor, may be objected in the words of Seneca, "*Sanabilibus ægrotamus malis ; ipsaque nos in rectum genitos natura, si emendari velimus, juvat :*" but, alas ! what is the business of all is the employment of none ; we suffer an immense revenue to be raised on us, for two good purposes — for industry and charity ; and permit the perversion of half of it ; for, was one half of this revenue honestly and fairly applied to the purposes
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of the act, the poor would be more creditably and comfortably maintained; and the other half might remain in the pockets of that class of the community, from whom the whole is, with such strictness, exacted.

If it should be objected, that no sufficient demand would be found for such a manufactory by children, the answer is obvious; there is a point to which the experiment might be pushed, and it will be time enough to stop when we can go no farther: — it is not a sufficient excuse for our doing nothing, that we cannot do every thing. An account printed by the society, for the promotion of youthful industry in the county of Lincoln, has, among many other excellent observations, pointed out the means of promoting a consumption of this produce of their manufactory, which may be seen in the margin;* and some good consequences would certainly result to the poor themselves, as well as to those who are so heavily taxed for their maintenance; for, if the infant poor could, by their industry, clothe their parents and themselves, by this leading principle of the statute being put in force; the overseers would have smaller bills with the shop-keepers, whose livelihood principally arises from supplying the poor at exorbitant prices with their daily wants; the rising generation would be educated in more regular habits of industry; and the poor themselves would be better clothed, and at a cheaper rate.

That the good resulting from the execution of that section of the 43d of Elizabeth, which respects the employment of the infant

* With all those who have the good of their country at heart, it should be an object of constant attention to promote the consumption, no less than the sale, of wool. A parish-officer, who was mindful of this, would never purchase a cotton or linen gown for the poor instead of a woolsey one, which is much stronger, cheaper, and more comfortable; nor would he give them coarse cloth aprons, when blue woollen aprons would answer every purpose much better, and save washing; nor, lastly, would he suffer the money of the parish to be laid out in thread stockings instead of worsted ones: all which things have been but too frequently practised.

poor, may appear in a stronger light, it may be worth while to call to mind what is, in fact, at this day the employment of the rising generation of the poor in that part of England where manufactures do not thrive, and where the operations of husbandry are the principal sources of industry and labour: there, in such districts which comprehend above a moiety of the kingdom, the children of the parish are encouraged by their parents to employ themselves in every act of speculation which is in their power, and which, from the insignificance of the property stolen, individually, is an object scarcely worthy the attention of the magistrate; and to which, if he, on complaint made, did attend, he could not correct; because the little culprits are not objects of legal punishment; children of five, six, or seven, years of age being sent out in parties to pilfer.

But if the individual instance is too trifling for our notice, the aggregate forms no inconsiderable mischief done to the public, and property purloined from society by these little thieves: a child steals a turnip or two daily for its parent's dinner, it is nothing; but the practice, continued through a winter by hundreds of them, will consume some acres; it carries, with the assistance of its playmates, the stakes from the hedges, and loose bars or rails from the fences; the value of the property is small, though to repair the mischief done is expensive; and, when these depredations are carried on in the vicinity of a town or parish, where the population of this class of people are hundreds or thousands, the total of mischief is considerable; and, though the crime is an object of civil punishment, the child is not; and the encouragement or connivance of their parents cannot fall under the magistrates authority; for, the property stolen is instantly consumed, before any search-warrant can operate.

In the mean time, the material injury is done to the morals; the rising generation are, in early youth, accustomed to habits which turn them, from the path of honest industry, to the high road

road which leads, through every species of depredation on society, to the gallows.

L E T T E R IX.

THE necessary relief of soldiers and mariners, which is enforced in a chapter immediately following the act, that has been the subject of our attention; and a law to redress the misemployment of lands, goods, and stocks of money, heretofore given to certain charitable uses, which follows chap. 4th; complete the plan of that parliament which sat till near the close of the reign of Elizabeth; *the latter statute being at present as necessary to be called into practice, and, if executed, as well calculated for bringing to light any perversion of that vast property which has been left by our forefathers for charitable purposes, as any plan that the ingenuity of the legislature could in these days invent*; and it still remains the law of the land; and the authority of the chancellor might at any time call it into use, by an appointment of commissioners, according to the act, within the different dioceses.

These, with many more statutes for the regulation of the internal police of the kingdom, were the production of the last parliament which sat in the reign of Elizabeth; an æra, with no extravagance of metaphor, called *golden*, if applied either to the glory of her reign, with respect to the success of her subjects arms; the importance of it, with respect to foreign powers; or its utility and happiness as it regarded those who lived under her dominion: whatever may have been her private character as a woman; whatever intrigues, which may have arisen from love, jealousy, or the other baser passions that disgraced her court; a lapse of near two hundred years has with propriety removed, as with a veil, from our eyes; and they now only remain in the pages of the novelist or
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the retailer of frivolous anecdote ; but her last words to her last parliament, while coupled with such laws as do honour to human nature, and are a severe satire on the load of revenue-acts, with which our modern statute-books abound, ought to remain with grateful recollection fixed on the minds of all posterity ; “ I know that the commonwealth is to be governed for the good and advantage of those who are committed to me ; not of myself to whom it is entrusted ; and that an account is one day to be given before another judgement-seat.”

During the reign of James the First, very little was done by the legislature in the regulation of the internal police ; the jealousy, which arose both in the mind of the King and the Commons, occasioned that prince to avoid, as much as his necessities would permit him, meeting his parliament ; while the House of Commons, who early in the reign felt the effects of those high notions of prerogative which disturbed the repose, equally of the prince as of his subjects, were too intent on the preservation of their own privileges to attend to the general welfare of the people ; yet one of their first acts of legislation related to rating the wages of artists and labourers ; and, by stat. 1. cap. 6. parliament enlarged the powers of justices of the peace with respect to the rating the wages of workmen, as directed by 5th of Eliz. cap. 4. extending the same to all manner of workmen whatever, “ either working by the day, week, month, or year, or taking any work at any person’s hand whatsoever, to be done by the great or otherwise,” rendering also the return of the certificate of such rates of wages into Chancery unnecessary ; by directing them to be proclaimed, engrossed in parchment, and kept, by the Custos Rotulorum of the county, among the records.

This attention to, and enlargement of, the powers of the 5th of Elizabeth, is a proof that good arose to the public from the rating of wages ; because, if the experience of forty years had proved it to be replete with more mischief than use, it cannot be
supposed

supposed that the legislature would have extended the practice, and made the power general, which had been hitherto confined to particular classes of workmen ; nor would the execution of the act have been rendered more easy to the magistrates ; yet there is reason to believe, that the justices seldom enforced the execution of these acts ; because, on a search made in the office of the clerk of the peace for the county of Essex, only one instance could be found ; and that at Easter-sessions, 1661 : and Sir John Cullum, in his History of Hawstead, in the county of Suffolk, whose intention, in that excellent model of parochial history, was, among other objects, to give the reader information on the subject of wages of the poor, in times now far removed, and the cotemporary prices of the necessaries of life, mentions also but one instance, viz. in Easter-sessions, 1682.

Other statutes, affecting the lower classes of our fellow-subjects, although not immediately relative to the topic in question, were also passed in the beginning of this reign : the 39th of Elizabeth, with respect to the punishment of rogues and vagabonds, was explained and continued, by chap. 7th ; haunting and tippling in ale-houses was also restrained, by chap. the 9th of the same sessions ; an act, the preamble to which is curious, and states, very properly, the only proper use of such places ; “ Whereas the antient, true, and principal use of inns, ale-houses, and victualling-houses, was for the receipt, relief, and lodging, of wayfaring people, travelling from place to place, and for such supply of the wants of such people as are not able, by greater quantities, to make their provision of victuals ; and not meant for entertainment and harbouring of lewd and idle people, to spend and consume their money, and their time, in lewd and drunken manner,” Be it enacted, &c.

As this act punishes the keeper of the ale-houses permitting unlawful drinking, so does chapter the fifth, of the statute passed in 1606, punish the tippler, or drunkard, himself ; both which statutes,

statutes, although at present the law of the land, and well calculated to prevent drunkenness, the root of much evil, yet are no more attended to by the magistrate of these days than as vain and nugatory sounds, of the regulation of other times, which are long passed away, and the memory of which remains not, except in the page of history.

In the seventh statute of this reign, chapter the third, directions are enacted, how the money, given for the binding poor children apprentices, shall be employed; by the preamble to which, it appears, that great sums of money had then been given, and more was likely to be given, for the purpose of binding poor children apprentices unto needful trades and occupations; a purpose to which the charity of modern times, although in many instances profuse, and in some redundant, has not in the least attended; and, therefore, this statute, except as far as it may respect sums of money then given, and still in stock, or lands, bought therewith, is now not in use.

The fourth chapter of this session has somewhat of a reference to the 43d of Elizabeth; as that directed a stock to be raised, to set the idle, whether from choice or necessity, to work, so this statute directs houses to be builded, to receive those who are idle, by choice, in which they may be compelled to work; and gives birth to houses of correction, and the regulations respecting them; for, although, by the 39th statute of the late reign, justices of the peace were empowered to erect houses of correction; yet it appears, by Lord Coke's reading on this statute, that those powers were not carried into execution; and a penalty of 5*l.* is now laid on every justice, within every county of the realm, where such house shall not be erected or provided.

One most severe clause is inserted in this act of parliament, affecting the mothers of bastard-children; a severity totally incompatible with any idea of a just proportion of punishments to crimes, and diametrically opposite to every principle of moral rectitude:

that

that clause is alluded to, which empowers magistrates to commit to the house of correction, to be punished and set to work, for the term of a whole year, any woman who shall have a bastard, which may be chargeable to the parish; and this, without any authority of mitigation, for the first offence; and, for the second offence of this kind, “*estfoons if she shall offend again,*” she is to be committed, *until she shall find securities not to offend again*; so that, for the first instance of immorality, she is to suffer a severity of punishment infinitely disproportionate to the offence: for the second, or any future instance of similar misconduct, her punishment, if she be a prostitute to a man of property, may be nothing: a severe and foolish law; one much more honoured in its neglect, than in the observance.

After the dissolution of this parliament, in 1609, none other was called for fourteen years; and, in the mean time, James had full opportunity of giving his subjects a sufficient specimen of king-craft, as he was used to call it, or art of government; but, in the twenty-third year of his reign, he found himself obliged to assemble the parliament, which continued sitting until his death: that happened in 1625. In this parliament, nothing was done, with respect to the interests of the lower classes of the people, except another act to repress drunkenness.

L E T T E R X.

THE reign of Charles the First continues the acts already in force, with respect to the poor, but produces nothing new on this subject, except a farther restraint on tippling in inns and ale-houses. The former acts had restrained, by penalty, his majesty's subjects only; this, which passed in the first year of his

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reign, extended to foreigners also. It is curious to observe, that as soon as ale-houses had obtained a legal sanction, under the license of the neighbouring magistrates; the bad consequences resulting from them; in promoting idleness, debauchery, drunkenness, and all manner of mischief, was severely felt by the nation, and frequent attempts were made by the legislature to restrain those abuses, but, it is feared, with little effect; because it may be perceived, that additional restraints on persons who haunted those pests of all good order were imposed, year after year, by the parliament; and facility of conviction was consulted, almost at the expense of religious obligations. These statutes remain in full force at this day;* and it is in the knowledge of us all, how much society hourly suffers in its morals and industry, from these too frequent and too much frequented places of license and ebriety; but the financier will tell us, that, by these and similar enormities, the revenue is increased, and the treasury makes up a good account: to which the proper reply of a good subject and a good citizen may be,

Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis,
Tempus eget.

The scene of confusion and civil discord, which followed the parliament that was held in the 16th of Charles the First, and the intestine wars, which desolated this kingdom, during a period of near twenty years, until the restoration of the second Charles, forbid any expectation of separating, during their continuation, the concerns of the poor from the miseries of the soldier: *inter arma*

* By the 21st of James the First, chap. the 7th, which is continued by an act in the third of Charles the First, and again by an act in the sixteenth of the same reign; the oath of a tippler, having first confessed that he was tippling in an ale-house, shall be sufficient proof against others of the offence; which incurs, to those tippling, a penalty of five shillings; and, to the ale-house-keeper permitting it, a disability to keep an ale-house for three years ensuing the offence.

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silent leges, says Lord Coke; and the maxim has ever been found true by experience, which has also proved to us, that, in all civil commotions, where the folly of the million has been made subservient to the purposes of the few, the rights of the citizen fall before the self-interested purposes of individuals.

Until the Restoration, which was above half a century from the 43d year of the reign of Elizabeth, the parliament had made no alteration in the laws with respect to the maintenance and employment of the poor; and that statute remained the law in that respect; nor has there been preserved to us any pamphlet or fugitive tract, which, during that period, has reflected on this statute, as being deficient either in policy or prudential regulation; on the contrary, it has been continued, from time to time, without any comment whatever, and particularly by stat. 3. Charles I. chap. 4. and 5.; a silent but a strong presumption, that it had been hitherto found equal to the great purpose expected from it; the extension of charity by the means of industry.

Soon after the restoration of Charles the Second, that is to say, in the 13th and 14th year of his reign, which takes its date in the statute-book from the death of his father, it was perceived that partial inconvenience had risen, in a manner, from the general good effects of this act of Elizabeth, as an extract from the preamble to chap. 12th of the statute of that date will plainly demonstrate; which states, that “whereas poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves where there is the best stock and largest commons and wastes to build cottages.” It appears by this preamble, that a good stock of materials to work up, and a chance of obtaining habitations, occasioned the poor to migrate, from those parishes where the overseers were negligent in these matters, to other parishes where they had a chance of a domicile and employment; and surely every principle of freedom and every duty of reciprocal justice should permit the poor who live by their

labour to remove *ad libitum* to those parishes where they may find labour to live by; notwithstanding the partial inconvenience felt by particular parishes, when the general good will be so much better promoted, both in principle and practice. This is the first act which respects the settlements of the poor, but does not attempt in any instance an alteration of the 43d of Elizabeth, and may rather be called, with no impropriety, a useful addition to that venerable edifice; comprehending in it the origin of settlements, work-houses, and the laws respecting rogues and vagabonds, together with regulations as to the maintenance of natural children.

The dignity of history very seldom stoops to record the distresses or comforts of the bulk of the people; the business of the historian is with wars and revolutions, treaties and the infringement of them, the intrigues of party, and the excesses of the higher orders of the state; but rarely does he condescend to relate,

The short and simple annals of the poor.

It is, therefore, from other sources our information must be supplied; from the pamphlet, or the newspaper of the day; and, hitherto, but few of these have come to hand, of so remote a date as the middle of the last century; from the only existing instance on record, that could be found, of the justices rating of wages, in the county of * Essex, compared with the cotemporary prices of wheat

* Essex, Easter-Sessions, 1661.

Common labourers, fellers, and makers up of wood, ditches, and hedges; threshers, and all other common labourers, by the day (the time of harvest excepted).

	With Board.		Without Board.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
From the middle of March to the middle of September	-	0 8	—	1 2
From the middle of September to the middle of March	-	0 6	—	1 0
Man hay-maker	-	0 8	—	1 0
Woman hay-maker	-	0 5	—	0 10
Weeders of corn	-	0 4	—	0 9
				Mowers

wheat and malt, a reasonable conclusion may be drawn, that the proportion, between the scarcity of the *necessaries* of life and price of labour, was by that means more exactly preserved than in these times; for, although the price of wheat is very high, yet, in the other articles of the consumption of a poor family, in candles, soap, beer, no such excise-duties took place then as now do; nor was tea and gin so much their beverage; nor had paper-credit so much depreciated the value of money, by raising ideal riches, as at present; for, in such a proportion it is supposed the value of gold and silver to be decreased, and consequently the money-price

	s.	d.	s.	d.
Mowers of corn and grafs	0	10	1	6
A fallower	0	6	1	3
Man-reaper	1	0	1	10
Woman-reaper	0	8	1	2

LABOURERS BY TASK.

	s.	d.
Mowing an acre of grafs	1	10
Well-making, clean raking, and cocking, an acre of grafs, ready to carry,	2	0
Reaping, or shearing, well-binding, cocking, or shocking, an acre of wheat, rye, or meslin	4	0
Reaping, or shearing, an acre of barley, or bullymony, binding and shocking the same	2	6
The same to oats	2	6
Reaping and well-binding an acre of beans	3	6
Mowing an acre of barley or oats	1	2
Making an acre of pease, vetches, or tares	1	9
Making and ditching a rod of new ditch, 4 feet wide, out of the whole ground, 3 feet deep, 1½ foot at bottom, double-set with quick, and setting a hedge upon it, after the rate of 16½ feet a rod, with gathering sets for the same,	1	2
A rod of ditch, of like breadth and depth, without quick	0	6
Threshing wheat and rye, the quarter	1	10
———— barley and oats	0	10
———— beans, pease, bullymony, tares	0	10

	£.	s.	d.
The prices of wheat, this year, as appears by Fleetwood's Chronicon,			
per quarter	3	10	0
Malt, per quarter	1	13	4

of

of the necessaries of life increased, that a poor family which could, in the middle of the last century, earn 20*l.* a year, was in a better situation than the same family would be now with earnings amounting to 50*l.* a year; therefore, the prices of labour were more adequate to supply their wants,* although the price of wheat was very high, than the prevailing prices in this county at present; besides, at this time, a poor family might, without the fear of being sent back by the parish-officers, go where they chose, for better wages, or more certain employment; whereas, since the year 1662, the law of settlements, introduced by 13th and 14th Charles II. chap. 12. has much abridged their liberty in that respect; made them of necessity stationary, and obliged them to rest satisfied with those wages they can obtain where their legal settlement happens to be; a restraint on them which ought to insure to them wages, in the parish where they must remain, more adequate to their necessities, because it precludes them in a manner from bringing their labour, the only marketable produce they possess, to the best market. It is this restraint which has, in all manufacturing-towns, been one cause of reducing the poor to such a state of miserable poverty; for, among the manufacturers, they have too frequently found masters who have taken, and continue to take, every advantage, which strict law will give; of consequence, the prices of labour have been, in manufacturing-towns, in an inverse ratio of the number of poor settled in the place; and the same cause has increased that number, by inviting foreigners, in times when large orders required many workmen; the masters themselves being the overseers, whose duty, as parish-officers, has been opposed by their interest in supplying the demand.

But, on the other hand, the question, What are the necessaries of life? should be taken into consideration; and this is a point not

* *Wants*: this expression is understood to comprehend not necessaries alone, but the comforts and indulgences of life.

easily settled ; the rigid rule of justice so constantly militating with the laudable, but desultory, feelings of humanity. When we assert that nothing is a necessary to life but what supports the stream of life, we confine the number of articles within a narrow limit ; and possibly to those articles also whose price is not much risen, or the use of which is trifling in a poor family, as linen, soap, leather ; but when, with a wider scope of humanity, we take in the comforts of life which were in contemplation in the preceding paragraph, the expenses of the poor are very considerably increased. To settle our ideas on this subject, Adam Smith may be thought no improper moderator ; at least his high character for strong sense, combined with deep knowledge of the topic, point him out as of the best authority : he reckons as necessities to the poor in England, linen, soap, leather shoes ; he classes beer, ale, tobacco, tea, sugar, and spirituous liquors, among the luxuries of life, but professes he means to throw no reproach on a temperate use of them.

Although the reign of Charles II. extended to the year 1685, and the parliament regularly sat every year, except the 21st, 24th, 26th, and 28th, of his reign, yet but little more was enacted respecting the poor : in the 23d session, by chap. the 18th, some farther regulations with respect to work-houses were thought expedient, and passed into a law ; and, in the 19th, the 22d, and 30th, session, the situation of poor prisoners was taken into consideration, and some good regulations made to give them means of employing themselves while in confinement ; to prevent the spreading of infectious distempers, and to expedite the discharge of prisoners, when liberated by course of law ; yet, as they do not fall under the particular object of this inquiry, there is no occasion to make any observations on them ; but let us pass on to the ensuing reign, stopping only to inquire whether any treatises have been printed before the Revolution, and preserved to the present time, which may throw light on this important subject.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R X I.

THE information which may be gleaned on the subject of the poor of this kingdom, from the earliest time, until the close of the last century, by tracts, pamphlets, or fugitive publications, is not much more satisfactory and particular, than what the pages of the history of this country afford. It should seem, that, excepting here and there, a mind thirsty after that information, which may be serviceably applied to the benefit of our fellow-creatures; people, in general, of all denominations, at all times, recede with disgust from inquiries of this nature, and throw aside that book, whose periods remind them of the miseries attendant on the great mass of human lives within this kingdom; or vainly, although with a good intent, attempt to point out some means to mitigate or avert them: the result of every inquiry a country-life could afford, together with an unlimited order to one of the first booksellers in town, to collect every thing that has been written on the subject, to the close of the last century, has produced a very insignificant list; more tracts must certainly have been published, but it is supposed not many worth notice, because scarcely any are quoted or mentioned in the pages of those which have been collected. Among the farrago of pamphlets published during the last century, which the British Museum possesses, many, it is possible, whose titles would not otherwise have existed to this time, have been preserved; but neither time or opportunity have offered to search that immense arsenal of literature; in the mean time, the subject itself presses on the mind; and some apprehension lest the illness of my friend* should occasion a temporary discontinuance of that useful publication, on account of which the inquiry was first begun, before it is brought to a conclusion, which would, in

* At this time Mr. A. Young was dangerously ill.

some respect, leave the Annals of Agriculture imperfect; a work which reflects lasting honour on *him*, who, with such success, has brought, as it were, under a glance of the eye, a mass of agricultural information, that will long remain a valuable treasure to the kingdom. These reasons have urged me to continue the plan hinted at a few pages back, although at present so indifferently provided with materials on the subject.

It creates no small degree of surprise, that a mind so capacious as the Viscount St. Alban's, who lived cotemporary and was art and part with that parliament which passed the famous statute of Elizabeth, among the voluminous pages of his writings and the vast variety of subjects his almost omnipotent abilities comprehended and his indefatigable pen treated of, should not have left a single tract on this important subject: one paragraph alone can be found, a mere drop, amidst the ocean of five quarto volumes of his work; and this drop is in his advice to the king, touching Mr. Sutton's* estate; but by this it is apparent, that his ideas were not well digested on this subject, nor was the topic closely entered on. The only passage worth extracting is the following: "But chiefly it were to be wished such beneficence towards the relief of the poor were so bestowed, as not only the mere and naked poor should be sustained, *but also that the honest person which has hard means to live, upon whom the poor are now charged, should be, in some sort, eased*:† for that were a work generally acceptable to the kingdom, if the public hand of alms might spare the private hand of tax; and, therefore, of all other employments of that kind, I commend most *houses of relief and correction, which are mixed hospitals*; where the impotent person is relieved, and the sturdy beggar buckled to work,

* The founder of the Charter-House.

† This sentiment is amazingly prophetic of the experienced pressure of the poor-rates in modern times: the *poor* pay to the rates for the maintenance of the *poorer*, and are themselves sinking from want of maintenance and relief.

and the unable person also not maintained to be idle, which is ever joined with drunkenness and impurity, but is sorted with such work as he can manage and perform; and where the uses are not distinguished, as in other hospitals, whereof some are for aged and impotent, and some for children, and some for correction of vagabonds, but are general and promiscuous, that may take off poor, of every sort, from the county, as the county breeds them; and thus the poor themselves shall find the provision, and other people the sweetness of the abatement of the tax. Now if it be objected, that houses of correction in all places have not done the good expected; as it cannot be denied, but in most places they have done much good; it must be remembered, that there is a great difference between that which is done by the *distracted government of justices of peace*, and that which may be done by a *settled ordinance*, subject to a regular visitation, as this may be."

When Sir Francis Bacon, as attorney-general, drew up this letter of advice for his master James the First, he must surely have conceived in his mind some idea of *incorporated houses of industry*; and anticipated, as it were, by prophetic foresight, somewhat of those excellent regulations, which, through the auspices of a reverend and worthy magistrate, have brought the poor under such good order, and so reduced the rates in those parishes, whose house of industry he, with such attention, at present, presides over.*

The words *distracted government of justices of peace* are worth our notice: it is to be feared that the observation would equally apply, through the many years that have passed since this advice was given, as it did then; a farther comment on this expression would be indecorous; but it warrants this single observation, that, as the *gratis* opinion of a lawyer is not thought so good as that which a *fee* commands, so possibly the *gratis* or *voluntary attention* of the gentlemen in the commission of the peace is likely to be more

* The Rev. Mr. Cooke, of Semer, in Suffolk.

defultory and distracted than that which a salary might purchase.

My Lord Hale is the first great name on the list of those who have turned their attention to the employment and relief of the poor. The year his plan first appeared in is not apparent in the copy, but it certainly preceded any other in my possession, as it must have been written before 1676, that being the year in which he died: it would take up too much time to transcribe all in this excellent tract, which is deserving our attention; therefore those parts only shall be taken notice of which are most to our purpose; he says, "The only statute which provides universally for the poor is the forty-third of Elizabeth, which generally makes two provisions.

" *First*, for the impotent poor that are not able to work; and for these it is a good and effectual provision, if duly executed.

" *Second*, for those *that are able*. The defects of this provision are, first, in the execution; the second defect is in the law itself; which is, that there is no power in the justices of peace, or some superintendent power, to compel the raising of a stock, where the church-wardens and overseers neglect it. — 2. The act chargeth every parish apart, where it may be they are able to do little towards it; neither would it be so effectual as if three, four, five, or more contiguous parishes, did contribute towards the raising of a stock, proportionable to the poor respectively. — 3. There is no power for hiring or erecting a common house, or place, for their common work-house; which may be, in some respects and upon some occasions, useful and necessary, as shall be shewn.

" The remedies are:

" 1. That the justices of the peace, at the quarter-sessions, do set out and distribute the parishes, in their several counties, into several divisions, in each of which there may be a work-house for the common use of the respective divisions, wherein they are respectively placed; to wit, one, two, three, four, five, or six,

parishes to a work-house, according to the greatness or smallness, and accommodation, of the several parishes.

“ 2. That, at the sessions, the church-wardens and overseers of the poor of the respective parishes, bring in their several rates for the relief of their respective poor, upon oath. And that the said justices do assess three, four, or five, yearly payments, to be levied and collected at one or two entire sums, within the time prefixed by them, for the raising a stock, to set the poor, within those precincts, on work; and to build or procure a convenient work-house, for employing the poor (if need be) in it, and for lodging materials, and for instructing children in trade or work.

“ 3. That there be yearly chosen, by the said justices, a master for each work-house, with a convenient salary, out of the said stock, or the produce thereof, to continue for three years; and two overseers, to see the issuing and return of the said stock, and to take the accounts quarterly or monthly of the master, as they shall think fit.

“ 4. That the stock be delivered to the overseers, and by them issued to the master, as there shall be occasion; and that they also, from time to time, receive the produce of the said stock, and the accounts for the same.

“ 5. That, at the end of every year, the master and overseers give up their accounts to the two next justices of the peace, at times by them prefixed, and publicly notified to the inhabitants of each precinct, to the end that they may take any exceptions to such accounts, if there be cause.

“ 6. That the master and overseers of every respective work-house stand, and be incorporate, by the name of the master and overseers of their respective precincts, and capable to take in succession, by will or otherwise, lands, goods, or money, or other legacies or gifts, for the benefit of the poor within their respective precincts.

“ 7. That

“ 7. That they also be accountable, as well to their respective successors, as to the justices of the peace at their quarter-sessions, for the benefit, and produce, and employment, of such gifts and bequests.

8. “ That they be disabled to grant any lands, to them given or bequeathed, for any longer term than one year, and at an improved rent.

“ 9. That if any person, that is able to work, and not able to maintain himself, shall refuse to do so, he may be forced thereto, by warrant of two justices of peace, by imprisonment, and moderate correction in such work-house.

“ 10. If any person, employed by the master, shall embezzle, or wilfully prejudice, or spoil, his work, he shall, upon complaint and proof thereof, by the party grieved, to any justice of peace, and by warrant from him, receive imprisonment, or moderate correction, by warrant of such justice.

“ These are the heads of that provision I could wish for the setting the poor to work, which is but an essay, and may receive alterations or additions upon consideration.”

This excellent man then speaks of the benefits arising from his plan, and answers some objections to it; and then concludes, that such a plan, if it could be accomplished, would be a work of great humanity, which would become a Christian and a good Englishman. In this plan, the idea suggested by Sir Francis Bacon is improved, matured, and digested into some regularity; and, under this form, it presents to our view a prototype, as it were, of Mr. Gilbert's scheme, which has lately attracted the attention of the public.

The next publication which has been collected, in point of time, is by *Andrew Yarrington*, who appears, by his own account, to have been a linen-draper, and afterward employed by some gentlemen to bring a manufacture into England, from Bohemia and Saxony, made (to use his own words) of iron and tin: it appears also,
that

that he was a surveyor to some iron-works in Ireland; he certainly possessed great information on matters of trade, and a clear understanding: the imprimatur of his book bears date 1676; the title is an epitome of its motley contents, "England's Improvement, by Sea and Land, to outdo the Dutch without fighting, to pay Debts without Money, and to set at work all the Poor in England, with the Growth of our own Lands," *cum multis aliis*; in this curious and, in some respect, instructive book, may be found the first idea of a *school for industry*, according to the practice in Holland and Flanders, which, the author takes great pains to prove, might with profit be carried into effect in England. He also, in a vision of future glory, anticipates, in prospect, the extent of our paper-credit, our numerous inland navigations, the full employment of the infant poor, and our consequential riches. His vision is completely verified in the two first instances, and their consequences; why it may not, in the other, remains probably for another century to prove. But, surely, as the complaint, that the poor are not employed, and that idleness prevails among them, may be now made, with at least equal truth, towards the close of the eighteenth century, as it was about the middle of the seventeenth; why the other part of his prophecy should not be brought to pass remains in nothing but experience itself to shew, and it is to be hoped that the Sunday-schools will prove harbingers to the attempt.

Mr. Thomas Firmin, a friend of Archbishop Tillotson, is the next writer on this subject. His two letters to that prelate, entitled, "Some Proposals for the Employment of the Poor, especially in and about the city of London," bear date in the years 1678 and 1681: he appears to have been a man of respectable character, and frequently to have been employed in distributing private charity: in his first letter, he speaks of his success attending a plan for a kind of work-house, in the parish of Aldersgate, to employ the poor in spinning flax and hemp at their own houses. His experience,

rience, in this business, is great; and so is his success. He perceives, he says, by his experiment, "that the only way to provide for the poor, and to bring them to labour, is to provide such work for them as they may do at their own homes, which, though never so mean and homely, is more desired than any other place; and the way which several persons have proposed of bringing them to a work-house will never effect the end intended: for, suppose a woman hath a sick husband, or child, or some infirmity upon herself, in all such cases she may do something at home, but cannot leave her own house. True, indeed, for vagrants, or sturdy beggars, who have no habitation, and must be held to their labour, as galley-slaves are tied to their oars, such public work-houses are very necessary; and I wish we had more of them, and that those we have were employed to this purpose, to which they were at first designed and intended: but for such poor people as have habitations of their own, and who are known in the parish where they live, and would take pains at home, it is altogether unreasonable and unprofitable (in my judgement) to force them to a public work-house.

"If any parish that abounds with poor people *would set up a school, in the nature of a work-house, to teach poor children to work*, who wander up and down the parish, and parts adjacent, and between begging and stealing get a sorry living, but never bring any thing unto their parents, nor earn one farthing towards their own maintenance, *it would, in a short time, be found very advantageous*, not only to the poor children, who, by this means, whilst young, should be inured to labour, and taught to get their own living, but also to their parents, who should hereby both be freed from any charge by keeping them, and also in time be helped by their labour, as it is in other places.

"And, farther, the parish would, by this means, be freed from much charge, that now they are at, either to keep these children, or to allow their parents something toward it, nothing being
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thought a greater argument for a large pension, than that a man or woman hath six or seven children; whereas, unless they were all born at one time, or come faster into the world than ordinarily so many children do, it is very hard if some of them be not able to work for themselves. I myself have, at this time, some children working to me, not above seven or eight years old, who are able to earn 2*d.* a day; and some, that are but a little older, 2*s.* a week; and I doubt not to bring any child, about that age, to do the like: and still as they grow up, and become proficient, even in this poor trade of spinning, they will be able to get more, and to spin better, than older people. Neither would I have these schools confined only to spinning, but to take in knitting, and making of lace, or plain-work, or any other work which the children shall be thought most fit for: and this is that, which (as I am informed) is practised in other countries with so great advantage, that there are few poor children, who have attained the age of seven or eight years, that are any charge to the parish or burthen to their poor parents: and Mr. Chamberlain (in his book, entitled, *The present State of England*, p. 137) hath observed, that, in the city of Norwich, it hath been of late years computed and found, that (yearly) children, from six to ten years of age, have gained twelve thousand pounds more than what they have spent, and that chiefly by knitting fine Jersey stockings."

To this plan he supposes objections to be made. He answers them all, except the last question, which is:—

"What will you do with all the yarn these poor people shall spin? If you weave it into cloth, the commodity is brought over so cheap, that you will never be able to sell, without much loss?"

"*Answer.* I must confess this objection hath too much of truth in it, to be wholly removed. The best answer I can make to it, at present, is this:—That we had much better lose something by the labour of the poor, than lose all by letting them live
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in sloth and idleness : for, suppose you should give 6*d.* for that work which is really worth but 5*d.* ; hence will 5*d.* really be got to the nation, though 1*d.* should be lost to the parish. Yet, besides, let it be considered, that, if this person had not been employed, there would not less have been spent, but rather more ; forasmuch as 6*d.* that is got by labour, doth many times go farther than 12*d.* given for doing nothing. All the time people are idle, they will be spending, if they have it ; and, if they have it not, it is like they will be worse employed."

It also appears, from this letter, that no great good was conceived to arise from work-houses in the metropolis, of which they now had received some years experience ; the act of parliament, authorizing incorporated work-houses within the bills of mortality, having passed in 1662.

In this letter is also the idea of a *badge* on those among the poor, who, being incapable of labour, are maintained by the parish ; and, by the badge, it was imagined, they would not be likely to receive much from begging ; it being apparent, by the badge, that their parish maintains them.

The second letter, which appeared in 1681, seems much to our purpose, as it contains a plan of a School of Industry ; but it would be of little service to give his intentions in detail, not only on account of the length of quotation which would be necessary, but because it does not appear that his scheme was ever carried into execution ; and it is apprehended that a more perfect plan actually is now in practice through many parts of Lincolnshire, which, if any wish to establish such a school of industry fortunately prevailed, might be obtained from some of the worthy trustees ; and such a school might be applied to spinning flax, as well as wool, knitting of stockings, winding of silk, making of lace, or plain-work, and the like. In this letter, also, Mr. Firmin supposes objections to his plan, and answers them all, except the last, which is the same as has been noticed in his first letter, and which he confessed him-

self unable *perfectly* to answer; and here he gives the same reply as he did to the same question before, which has been already mentioned.

On the whole, his several schemes are practicable; and they fall from the pen of an honest and experienced man. His reasons in favour of them, answering the objections which he supposes may be made, are, in general, conclusive, except in the instance which has been recited; and the objection itself, as to the difficulty of finding a sale for the goods manufactured, would not probably be so strong at present, as it was a hundred and twelve years ago; nor would it apply so much to a *county-school* of industry, as to one in *London*: the parents and relations of the poor children, whom their parishes now clothe at an expense much above the prime-cost of the wares manufactured, would, it is apprehended, give vent to a considerable quantity of the goods; more especially if the sale was encouraged by the parish-officers and farmers recommending the manufacture to their labourers.

L E T T E R XII.

SIR JOSIAH CHILD, who has, in his *new discourse of trade*, given one chapter on the relief and employment of the poor, shall be now attended to. It does not appear, by the edition whence this note is taken, which is the fourth, exactly when the first edition was published; although, as the parliament which sat in 1669 was not dissolved until 1679, it appears most probable, from the beginning of the preface, that it was published about the last date; and, therefore, does not improperly follow Mr. Firmin's Letters.

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In the chapter which relates to the poor, Sir Josiah begins by intimating to the reader, that this is a *calm* subject, and thwarts no *common* or *private* interest among us, except that of the common enemy of mankind, the devil. It must strike every reader, that things are strangely altered since this tract was written, as the subject is in these days by no means *calm*, and thwarts many private interests in every parish; although, it must be confessed, that, in some respect, these are the interests of the devil, as they are opposite to every interest of integrity and common honesty.

He argues for a defect in the poor-laws, from the failure in execution of those statutes which relate to the poor, and rests the proof of his argument on this fact, that, in every change of parties this nation may have experienced, all parties had these laws to steer by, and none of them sufficiently maintained the impotent and employed the indigent. Could this worthy merchant be a member of parliament? Did he live in the world, and not know, by constant experience, that the maintenance of the impotent, or the employment of the indigent, is the very last object to which leaders of parties will attend? At least the experience of the present æra would prove the fact; however it might have been in the reign of Charles the Second. On the day when the House of Commons debated on the motion of Mr. Gilbert, respecting his bill, which was to determine whether it should be read a second time or be rejected, about forty-four members attended; not a member who ranked high on the treasury-bench, or in the phalanx of opposition; but Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Young, who opposed the bill, had nearly the debate to themselves; and this bill, which involved in its consequences the material interests of the nation, was thrown out, by a division of thirty-four to ten.

But, laying aside this objection to Sir Josiah's argument, and supposing that the parties in the state would attend to these regulations, and have attended to them, and that they are still badly executed, the same observation might be made with respect to the

laws of the Deity, the general received rules of morality, the Ten Commandments. All classes and conditions of men have long possessed all that is contained in the Decalogue, to regulate their conduct by; and all nations experience daily the faulty execution, or rather the constant breach, of these sacred laws; to argue from the faulty execution of breach of a municipal rule, the inefficacy or impropriety of that rule is bad logic; it is not the conclusion naturally following from the premises.

He says, the radical error is the leaving it to the care of every parish to maintain their own poor only.

To correct this error, he proposes a plan of a society, who are to be incorporated by act of parliament, by the name of *Fathers of the Poor*; to whom all church-wardens, overseers, and other officers, should be subordinate; gives them powers superior to the magistrates; and consumes many pages in forming rules for the conduct of this incorporation; which is apparently intended, in the first place, for the city of London and its vicinity, although, in the end, the whole kingdom is supposed to embrace the plan.

Here surely may be seen the outline from which Mr. Gilbert's late plan was filled up; or at least from hence fresh hints were taken; which, had it passed into a law, would probably have introduced throughout the kingdom general confusion.

It would scarcely be worth the trouble for the writer to transcribe, or the reader to peruse, the plan of Sir Josiah Child in the detail; as, it is conceived, it never ought to be carried into execution, by the force of law, in this kingdom; some parts of it, which shall be just glanced at, will be an apology for this opinion.

" 1st. That the said fathers of the poor may have liberty to assess all parishes within their district, so much as they yearly paid to that purpose any three years preceding.

" 2. That they may receive charitable contributions *on the Lord's day*, and at any other times they may think fit.

" 3. That they may have all the power justices have.

" 4. That

“ 4. That they may have power to send such poor, as they shall think fit, into *any of his Majesty's plantations*.

“ 5. That they may have petty banks or lumbards, for the benefit of the poor; may have *half what is paid at play-houses*, and *a patent for farthings*.”

In the same manner as Mr. Firmin, Sir Josiah asks and answers questions with respect to his proposed plan: two of the questions, together with part of the answers, are as follow:

“ What will be the advantage to the kingdom in general, and to the poor in particular, that will accrue by such a society of men, more than is enjoyed by the laws at present?”

Part of the answer. — “ Poor children will be instructed in learning and arts, and thereby rendered serviceable to their country.

“ What shall all the poor of these cities and counties, being very numerous, be employed about?”

Part of the answer. — “ The girls may be employed in mending the clothes of the aged, in spinning, carding, and other linen manufactories; and many in sewing linen for the exchange, or any housekeepers that will put out linen to the matrons, that have the government of them.

“ The boys in picking oakum, making pins, rasping wood, making hangings, or any other manufacture of any kind, which, *whether it turns to present profit or not, is not much material*; the great business of the nation being, first, *to keep the poor from begging and starving, and enuring such as are able to labour and discipline that they may be hereafter useful members to the kingdom*.”

This maxim deserves to be written in letters of gold in all work-houses, houses of industry, schools of industry, and to be engraved in capitals in the overseers books in every parish in the kingdom; this is the great and leading principle in the forty-third of Elizabeth; it is for this purpose the stock of wool, flax, hemp, thread, iron, is *there* directed to be purchased; not for the view of
immediate

immediate gain only, *but for the enuring such as are able to labour and discipline, that they be hereafter useful members to the kingdom.*

Two capital objections are obvious to any one who considers what has been transcribed of this plan.

The first is, that it proposes to raise a revenue for the maintenance and employment of the poor, in addition to that enormous one which we now complain of; and that by a *new* tax, and by a *patent for coining farthings: church-collections* are also proposed, which were the very ground-work of the present poor's rate.

The second objection is founded on the little regard paid to the liberty of the subject; as it proposes to give the unconstitutional power to this society of transporting the poor to our colonies, without a crime charged, merely from such conceptions of convenience that might arise in the breasts of these *fathers of the poor*.

The tendency of opulence to taint the honestest principles, and to operate as a draught of the river Lethe, in producing among the *rich* a total oblivion of the rights of the *poor*, is here well exemplified. — The merchant, rolling in wealth, forgets that banishment is a very serious punishment for a crime of some enormity; to such a degree is it dreaded, that some criminals have preferred death, the legal punishment of their crimes, rather than accept of pardon, on terms of transportation: he has also forgot, that, to transport a fellow-subject, a crime committed, indictment, verdict of their countrymen, and the sentence of the laws, are necessary.

These are all the publications, which have fallen under our observation, before that memorable æra in our history — *the Revolution*. An event, taken together with those laws and regulations, so favourable to the liberties of the subject, which accompanied it, as to demand our most humble thanks to the Almighty Governor of kings and states; and also our grateful remembrance of those who were his immediate agents, in fixing our liberties on their present solid basis; placed in a happy medium between *despotism* and *licentiousness*; a medium so difficult to be hit on, and so conducive to public

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lic happiness, when established, that philanthropy excites our wishes, possibly at the expense of our political interest, in favour of so many millions of our fellow-creatures as people the extensive kingdom of France; that they may, at length, find a haven of security to their liberties, in a constitution similar to what we now enjoy; equally removed from the anarchy of democracy, as the slavery of despotism. In the mean time, it shall be the fixed point in view of this tract, to continue the inquiry with respect to the poor-laws, and the relative situation of the poor themselves in society, from this period to the present day; and then offer some general principles, as a result from the whole of this investigation, in full confidence that the remedy, as well as the mischief, may be made apparent; and also with some rays of hope, that the vacant hour of a retired life may be made conducive to a diminution of the train of evil so large a mass of our fellow-subjects suffer under, as well as to a prevention of the increase, if not to a diminution, of the present load of expense attending their maintenance and support; which will soon pre-occupy the sources of revenue; and, in some future day of misfortune, may fall on us when we are less able to support it; and, in falling, crush us with its weight; entail in its consequences a long and tremendous ruin on all ranks of our fellow-subjects, together with a demolition of this much-admired constitution, and involve us in a scene of universal confusion.

L E T T E R XIII.

THE law of settlements, introduced by parliament in the reign of Charles the Second, was a serious abridgement of the liberty of our fellow-subjects; but was, at the same time, a consequence

quence resulting from that humane consideration, which our forefathers felt, for their preservation from actual want. It became a prudential caution, from the time that parish-rates were first collected for the relief of the poor, that the money raised in a parish should be applied to the relief of those only who belonged to that parish; hence has arisen a restraint on the poor, in many instances cruel; in all, unjust; a great additional expense on those on whom the rate is levied, arising from costs of law, in determining settlements; an additional trouble to the magistrates; and, to the gentlemen of the profession, much business, and many fees. Settlements now occupy no small portion of the attention of the King's Bench; and reports of the determinations in that court, respecting them, are become voluminous; and form a topic, of no small consequence, in the common-place-book of the gentlemen of the long robe.

That a great part of the restraint on the poor, or, at least, that which bears hardest on them, by preventing them living in parishes where they may best get their bread, unless it happens to be their place of settlement, or they have a certificate of the consent of their parish to live there, may, with equal convenience and safety, be removed; and that much of the expense attending contests between parishes, with respect to settlements, may be saved, is certain. The heads of the bill brought into the House of Commons, by Sir William Young, immediately after the dismissal of Mr. Gilbert's plan, warrant this assertion. To speculate on the reasons why so much of that bill as relates to certificates did not pass, is not the business of this investigation; which now proceeds to the first sanction the law of settlements received from the legislature after the Revolution.

Hitherto but little had been done to confine the poor within their own parishes. The statute, which passed in the reign of Charles the Second, empowering two justices, on complaint of the overseers, within forty days after any poor person had come to inhabit

habit in their parish, in any tenement under the annual value of ten pounds, that they were likely to become chargeable, to remove them to their last legal place of settlement, was, at the Revolution, the only law extant on that subject; and being, together with the alteration, by the 17th of James the Second, directing that the forty days should be accounted, from the time of delivery of notice in writing, about to expire; the 3d of William and Mary, chapter 11, again takes up the subject; and directs that the notice should be read in the church, immediately after service, on the next Lord's day after it shall have been delivered; and, then, that it shall be registered in the poor's book; and inflicts a penalty on the church-warden and overseer neglecting to read and register it: and also enacts, that serving a parish-office, paying parish-dues, and hiring and service for a year, of a person not having a wife or child, and serving an apprenticeship by indenture, shall also gain a settlement. In these several cases, the appeal lies from the two magistrates, adjudging the settlement, to the quarter-sessions.

A regulation, which is intended to act as a restraint on the parish-officers, in the distribution of the parish-money, is also enacted in this statute; a register is directed to be kept in every parish of the names of such as receive collections; and the parishioners are ordered to meet in the vestry yearly, in Easter-week, before whom this register is to be produced; and persons receiving collections are to be called over, the reasons of their taking relief examined, a new list made and entered, and no other persons but such as are in the list shall be allowed to receive collections, except in case of pestilential diseases, and the small-pox, without authority, under the hand of one justice of the peace, residing within such parish, or the parts adjoining.

Soon did experience prove the mischief of the acts, with respect to the settlements of the poor; so early did the hardship on them, and the inconvenience to the parishes, arising from these restric-

tions on their natural liberty, to get their bread where they could best find employment, appear ; that it was found necessary, in the year 1697, to open the door a little wider to them ; and to let out of their parishes such as the church-wardens, overseers of the poor, and a neighbouring magistrate, should grant a certificate to ; under the authority of an act passed in this year, for supplying some defects in the poor-law ; by which, such persons as may come to inhabit in any parish, bringing with them a certificate, properly attested, owning them to be inhabitants of the parish granting it, and engaging to provide for them whenever they ask relief of the parish in which they reside, shall not be removed until actually chargeable.

This act also directs badges to be worn on the shoulder of the right sleeve, by all those who receive alms from the parish ; and inflicts a penalty on the parish-officers relieving a person not wearing such a badge, and a punishment on the pauper refusing to wear it : — a good regulation, formed on wise principles, but almost universally neglected.

Persons, to whom poor children are bound apprentice, pursuant to the 43d of Elizabeth, are also, by this act, obliged to receive and to provide for their apprentices, under a penalty of ten pounds, to be applied to the use of the poor.

The legislature of this reign gives us no other regulations, with respect to the poor ; and the general neglect of those which have hitherto been enacted, either as checks on the dishonesty, selfishness, and indolence, of the parish-officers, or on the impositions, debauchery, and laziness, of the poor themselves, ought to be a matter of serious astonishment to those who reflect on the general complaint of the expense attending their maintenance and relief. What levity ! what absurdity ! in our lazy complaints of the weight of the poor's rate ; let us but clap our shoulders to the wheel ; the burthen is enormous, but might be shaken off, or greatly lightened, by those who administer the laws ; were those laws,

laws, in fact, administered. Why do we throw the blame from where it ought to fall, and charge the laws themselves with the consequences flowing from a breach of them? They form, in general, a code replete with humanity in their principle, wise in their regulations, which uniformly tend to discourage idleness and unnecessary expense, throughout the whole scope of their legislation; and are now charged with all those destructive evils they were intended, and are calculated, to prevent: the burthen of the poor's rate is heavy, and daily increasing, by a rapid accumulation; and the cause does not lie in a defect of the *laws* for the maintenance of the poor, but in a defect of the *execution* of those laws: we are affected with a similar impression as those weak minds, which, while the body is hastening to the grave, in a deep decline, have not energy enough to redeem returning health, by a course of exercise and virtuous temperance; but lazily suffer the vital principle to be extinguished, by continuing in a habit of indolence and debauchery: in short, we are infected by the *very vices*, which we so loudly cry out against, in those who are supported at our expense.

The same wretched principle appears to have pervaded the execution of the poor-laws, towards the end of the last century; and similar complaints of the increasing burthen of expense prevail; as may be seen in a pamphlet, named, *Bread for the Poor*, printed at Exeter, in 1698, by Samuel Darker, signed by the initials of the author's name, R. D.: he says, in a kind of introduction, that " whoever takes the small trouble of inspecting the poor-accounts, of a few parishes, may soon observe, that the charge of maintaining them, in some places, is, within sixty years past, advanced from forty shillings to forty pounds yearly; in others, twice that sum; and mostwheres double, — within twenty years past, and like to double again in a short time; and, notwithstanding such advance in maintaining the poor, yet the wages they receive is greater than formerly, work more plentiful, and provisions cheaper."

Where there is an effect, the author very properly says, there must be a cause; and that the causes are,

Profuseness of diet; instanced by the bread they eat, being of the finest flour; their drink, ale and spirits; spending their money in alehouses, to the amount of an incredible sum, as appears from the payments to the excise, very little of which is spent by travellers or housekeepers; and that they pay a price for what they drink, in these places, vastly superior to its real value.

As a remedy to this cause, relief in house-rent, meat, drink, clothes, *and not money*, is proposed.

The second cause is idleness: this arises from receiving pay from the parish: people of this description, soon conceiving that the parish is *obliged* to maintain them; therefore, their work is so much gained from them by the parish.

The remedy is; due care to employ the poor constantly, and oblige them to do such work as they can perform.

Giving excessive pay is another cause; by which is meant parish-allowance: under this head the common outgoings of a day-labourer is computed; but the computation proceeds on an idea of expenses, so much beneath what is necessary at present, and seems to be calculated for the county of Devon only, that it would be futile to insert it.

The remedy proposed is, frugal allowance in quantity, kind, and value.

The fourth cause is; living in separate houses; whereas, did three or four families live together, fire, candle, and attendance, might be saved.

The author then explains the method of providing diet for the poor; gives many reasons why such a management should take place; and answers objections which he supposes may be made to relieving them in the necessities of life rather than in money, which enables them to purchase the superfluities: — he also recommends
badges,

badges, which, as we have seen, were about this time enforced by parliament.

It appears, from this pamphlet, that the poor's rates for the county of Devon amounted, in the year 1698, to 38,991*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.* a year; which is asserted to be 30,000*l.* a year more than they were fifty or sixty years before; and that the whole amount of the poor's rates in the kingdom was then above twenty-one times as much, or more than 819,000*l.* a year; that, as *one age* had given a *fourfold advance* in Devonshire, it is worth consideration whether or not the public be in danger: for, if the rates of the whole kingdom increase proportionably, they will amount in another age to 3,276,000*l.*—Such is the reasoning in this pamphlet; let us now examine the fact.

About the middle of the 17th century, the assessment	£.
for the poor, in the county of Devon, was annually	
about - - - - -	8,291
In the year 1698, about - - - - -	38,991
In the year 1785, by the return of the overseers -	85,492

Therefore the gradual rise in this county was, in the first fifty years, about 30,000*l.*; in the next eighty-seven years 46,501*l.*

Taking the same dates for the poor's rates of the whole kingdom, the account will stand:

About the year 1650, at - - - - -	£.
In the year 1698, about - - - - -	188,811
In the year 1785, by the overseers returns - -	819,000
	2,184,904

In the first fifty years the rise is 730,189*l.*;—in the next eighty-seven years 1,265,904*l.*

The fact does not turn out quite so destructive to the interests of the public as the writer of this pamphlet prognosticated; but it presents a tremendous advancing increase, as well in an individual county, as throughout the kingdom.

Let

Let us now examine the prices of wheat at these three separate periods. The table of the price of wheat at Windfor-market, in vol. xiv. p. 227, of the Annals of Agriculture, will enable us to do it accurately.

								£.	s.	d.
Average-prices of wheat, from 1630 to 1654, by the										
quarter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9	10
Ditto, from 1687 to 1711								2	4	2
Ditto, from 1765 to 1789								2	6	11

The expense attending the maintenance of the poor does not, therefore, arise from the increased price of wheat; because, by this table, wheat is cheaper on the average of the last twenty-five years, ending in 1789, than in that of the first, ending in 1654; and but a little dearer than that ending in 1711.

The astonishing increase towards the close of the last century can be accounted for much more reasonably than that which has arisen in this. When the first estimate was taken, towards the middle of the century, the civil war, and its consequential depredations, found employment and sustenance for a very considerable body of the poor. The soldier is not maintained by the poor's rate; and the wages of those who remained to till the lands, or were employed in our then-mouldering manufactures, were probably raised on account of the want of hands. No such cause existed in 1698 or in 1785; and the price of wheat in 1698, referring to the same table, was 3*l.* 0*s.* 9*d.* a quarter; and, in 1785, 1*l.* 16*s.* 11*d.* a quarter. It appears, therefore, that the price of wheat has no effect on the expense attending the maintenance of the poor; and wheaten bread is, and long has been, the principal part of their food: this, although it appears a paradox, is a truth. When wheat was 3*l.* 0*s.* 9*d.* a quarter, the expenses of the poor amounted to but little more than one-third as much as in 1785, when the price of wheat was only 1*l.* 16*s.* 11*d.* a quarter.

As,

As, by this statement, it appears that the price of bread has no effect on the poor's rate; and it is believed that, all things considered, the expense of *necessary* clothing is not more increased than the last article (an assertion, the proof of which shall not now be entered on); and the article of firing remains also nearly at the same price it was a hundred years ago, theft supplying (in woodland-countries particularly) an ample succedaneum for price; it follows, that we should find out the probable cause of this alarming fact: alas! a superficial observer may read it as he runs, that indolence and luxury are the too-obvious causes: indolence forces numbers on our rates, which industry would maintain; luxury uses profusely what economic temperance would save: the one adds a million paupers to be maintained by us; the other expends, in the maintenance of that million, what ought to maintain double the number: the one, brings the multitude; the other, imaginary wants.*

Juvenal exclaims, when contemplating the decadency of the Roman empire, strongly typified by Britain, in its profuse extravagance,

———Sævior armis

Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.

The fact comes home to us, in every class and description of people; as well poor as rich, the governors and the governed. The consequence is also approaching; and our duty will be to submit, with resignation to that catastrophe, which we cannot sufficiently rouse our energy to oppose.

* The reader should be reminded, that this calculation, and the conclusion resulting from it, was written before the extreme high price of wheat, and a proportional dearness of every other grain, together with meat, had reduced the poor to extremity of distress, in the years 1795 and 1796. The various consequences resulting to the nation, from that most grievous affliction, will be observed upon, in its proper place, in the continuation of this history to the present day.

L E T T E R.

L E T T E R XIV.

NEXT, in order of time to this publication, follows an Essay towards regulating the Trade, and employing the Poor of this Kingdom; written, about the year 1700, by John Cary, Esq.; an abstract from which may be seen in Dr. Burn's History of the Poor-Laws; a publication which, had it been in my possession when this inquiry was first instituted, would have diverted me from the investigation; as I should have scarcely chosen to have gone over that ground, which so able a writer had beaten before me.

Mr. Cary attributes the burthen of the poor's rates to idleness; and inquires,

1. What hath been the cause of this idleness; and how hath it crept in upon us?
2. What must be done to restrain its going farther?
3. What methods are proper to be used to make provision for those who are past their labour?

The cause of idleness, he says, is the abuse of the poor-laws we have, and want of better; the encouragement of ale-houses, on account of the revenue; but, above all, our laws to set the poor at work are short and defective, tending rather to maintain them as poor, than to raise them to a better way of living; rendering the poor more bold, by their knowing that the parish-officers *must either find them work or give them maintenance.*

Nothing but good laws can restrain idleness; such as may provide work for those that are willing, and force those to work who are able. For this purpose work-houses are recommended, where the poor may be employed in manufactures.

The poor should also be employed in navigation, husbandry, and handicrafts.

The

The justices of peace should have power to assign youth to artificers, husbandry, manufacturers, and to bind them apprentice.

As to those of elder years, who will rather beg than work, let them be forced to serve the king in his fleet, or the merchants on board their ships.

Young people should be prohibited from hawking and singing ballads about the streets; stage-plays, *lotteries*, and *gaming-houses*, should be strictly looked after.

Alms-houses are recommended for those who are not able to work, or whose work is not sufficient for their maintenance. Poor's rates should be assessed with greater equality in cities and manufacturing-towns, where the poor are serviceable to the rich manufacturers, by carrying on their trade; yet, when age, sickness, or a numerous family, make them desire relief, their chief dependence must be on those who are but a step above their own condition.

Mr. Cary speaks, with praise, of an act of parliament which passed in the 7th and 8th year of William and Mary, for establishing a work-house at Bristol; which, he says, was pretty much on the plan proposed by Sir Josiah Child for the cities of London and Westminster; but, as this act is calculated for cities and great towns only, and cannot be a model for counties, he subjoins the following proposal, to carry this design on throughout the kingdom:

That power be given, by act of parliament, for parishes to incorporate for building hospitals, work-houses, and houses of correction, for employing the poor, under the management of guardians of the poor: the incorporation to be by hundreds.

The guardians to be the justices of the peace within the district, together with a number of the inhabitants, chosen out of each parish, in proportion to the assessment the parishes respectively pay.

The election of guardians to be every year, or two years.

The guardians to have power to choofe a governor, deputy-governor, treafurer, and affiftants, yearly; and be empowered to hold courts, make bye-laws, have a common feal; to order affeffments to be levied; to fummon the inhabitants of the parifhes within the hundred; to compel thofe who feek relief to dwell in their hofpitals and work-houfes; to take in young people, and bring them up to work; to teach them to read and write, and then bind them out apprentices; to provide for the aged and impotent; to affift thofe whofe labours will not maintain their families; to apprehend rogues, vagabonds, and beggars, and fet them to work; to inflict reasonable correction.

This plan, by Mr. Cary, may probably have given the hint to thofe gentlemen who applied to parliament, in the twenty-ninth year of his late majesty's reign, for the act for the better relief and employment of the poor in the hundreds of *Colmeis* and *Carlford*, in the county of Suffolk. Whether incorporations of diftricts for thefe purpofes have produced a greater proportion of good than evil; whether they have tended to introduce, among the lower claffes of this country, more induftry, better health, better morals, more comfort; and whether, on the whole, the fum of their happinefs is increafed; cannot be determined by any other means than an examination of their effects after thofe years of experience which have paffed fince their firft institution in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, where they were firft introduced: that they have generally tended to deprefs the poor's rate may be granted; but gold may be bought too dear.

It has been faid in a publication,* the author of which founded, or might have founded, his obfervations on an actual examination of the facts, after many years experience, that they have injured the principle of induftry, deftroyed the health and the hardinefs of the

* The true Alarm, or an Effay fhewing the pernicious Influence of Houfes of Induftry. 1787.

adult living in, and the youth brought up in them; have introduced bad morals, shocking habits of indecency; have occasioned a decrease of population; and would, if they became general, so destroy the moral sentiments and happiness of the country, as to affect the political liberties and patriotic spirit of the nation, by bringing up the rising generation with sentiments and habits so dispirited and debilitated, as to render them only fit slaves of despotism; for, the author says, and with much seeming justice of observation: Of what moment can it possibly be to a wretch who has not the liberty of walking out beyond a certain boundary, that the kingdom becomes a prey to foreign invaders, or is torn to pieces by an intestine commotion, unless you may suppose that he is more likely to rejoice at a scene of perfect confusion, as he might then entertain a hope, that, in a general wreck, where he had nothing to lose, he might seize upon something worth having.

But let us hope and believe that the consequences actually felt from these houses of industry are not so deplorable; let us recollect, that, when a man undertakes in the title-page of a pamphlet to prove a point, as this writer does, it is plain he has a point to prove; and in which, if he fails in instances or arguments, he may expect to meet with some degree of public derision; the fear of this twists his facts, turns his arguments, and points his periods, and no longer is he so friendly to truth as to system.

 L E T T E R X V .

IN expectation of finding, among the various subjects which fell under the pen of the celebrated Mr. Locke, some ideas which might serve as first principles on this interesting subject; I turned over his

works, and particularly attended to those tracts which he wrote on lowering the interest of money, and raising its value; a speculation which occupied the attention of the nation towards the close of the last century; but the actual situation of the poor not coming under his consideration, nothing very applicable to the subject is to be found; although a confused recollection strikes me, that some modern pamphlet on the poor-laws, or their regulation, had stated Mr. Locke's ideas on the subject as erroneous: whether so or not, it became me, while in pursuit of this inquiry, to know what those ideas were, which, had they been found among his works, whether wrong or right, demanded, on account of his great name, that they should be noticed; for such a mind as his, on every topic which may have been the object of its disquisition, is a polar star to the ignorant wanderer: although nothing directly applicable to the police of the poor is found, yet a comparison which he makes between a kingdom and a farmer is so much in point with their present profligate situation, the careless conduct of their overseers, and that spirit which has unhappily got head among our rulers, of encouraging the commercial world, at the expense of agriculture, and every principle of internal economy; while, at the same time, it so strongly authenticates the alarming prognostics of our decadency, alluded to a few pages back; that the whole passage, falling from the height of that great name, must make an impression, and occasion it to be worth transcribing.*

“ A kingdom grows rich just as a farmer, and no otherwise. Let us suppose the whole island of Portland one farm; and that the owner, besides what serves his family, carries to market, to Weymouth and Dorchester, &c. cattle, corn, butter, cheese, wool, or

* Again it should be recalled to the mind of the reader at what time these letters were written. No Board of Agriculture was then instituted; the labours of my friend, to whom they are addressed, laudable and persevering as those labours were in that best of national causes, the improvement of agriculture, had then received no national encouragement.

cloth,

cloth, lead, and tin, all commodities produced within his farm of Portland, to the value of 1000*l.* yearly; and, for this, brings home in salt, wine, oil, spice, linen, and silks, to the value of 900*l.* and the remaining 100*l.* in money. It is evident he grows every year 100*l.* richer, and so at the end of ten years will have clearly got 1000*l.*—If the owner be a better husband, and, contenting himself with his native commodities, buy less wine, spice, and silk at market, and so bring home 500*l.* in money yearly, instead of 1000*l.* at the end of ten years, he will have 5000*l.* by him, and be so much richer; he dies, and his son succeeds, a fashionable young gentleman, that cannot dine without Champagne and Burgundy, nor sleep but in a damask bed, whose wife must spread a long train of brocade, and his children be always in the newest French cut and stuff; he, being come to the estate, keeps on a very busy family, the markets are weekly frequented, and the commodities of his farm carried out, and sold as formerly; but the returns are made somewhat different; the fashionable way of eating, drinking, furniture, and clothing for himself and family, requires more sugar and spice, wine and fruit, silk and ribbons, than in his father's time; so that instead of 900*l.* per annum, he now brings home, of consumable commodity, 1100*l.* yearly. What comes of this? — He lives in splendour it is true; but this unavoidably carries away the money his father got, and he is every year 100*l.* poorer. To his expenses, beyond his income, add debauchery, idleness, and quarrels among his servants; whereby his business is disturbed, his farm neglected, and a general disorder and confusion prevail through his whole family: this will tumble him down the hill the faster, and the stock, which the industry, frugality, and good order, of his father laid up, will be quickly brought to an end, and he fast in prison; a farm and a kingdom, in this respect, differ no more than as greater and less. We may trade, and be busy, and grow poor by it, unless we regulate our expenses; if to this we are idle, negligent, dishonest, malicious, and disturb the sober
and

and industrious in their business, let it be upon what pretence it it will, we shall ruin the faster."

This comparison of Mr. Locke's runs on all-fours, as well with the actual state of the property, applied to the use of the poor in this kingdom, as with the situation of the finances belonging to the state itself. The reign of Elizabeth made the maintenance of the poor *compulsive*, with respect to the laity, which was in remoter times *voluntary*; what might, in those days of frugality, be taken from the pockets of her subjects by poor-rates, we know not; but we know, that, about the middle of the last century, the cattle, corn, butter, cheese, wool, yarn, consumed by this large family, cost about 118,000*l.* more than the produce of their industry amounted to; fifty years afterwards their expenses out-ran their income annually 819,000*l.*; in 1785, the surplus of their expenses, above their income, or the produce of their industry, gradually had increased to the enormous sum of 2,184,904*l.* annually. Here you see plainly the effects of the change of manners and living, so forcibly instanced in Mr. Locke's comparison; in the eating, drinking, furniture, clothing, sugar, spice, wine, and fruit, *otherwise tea and gin*; to which may be added, the debauchery, idleness, and quarrels of the individuals, which compose the bulk of this numerous family: to examine the comparison, with respect to the kingdom at large, is not the business of this tract.

The reign of Queen Anne is not so memorable for any laws regulating the internal police of the kingdom, as for the many blows which the ambitious spirit of Louis the Fourteenth received from the arms of the allies: nothing of material consequence was done with respect to the poor. By the 33d chapter of the fifth parliament, the vagrant-act of the last reign was continued, with some farther directions; as was, by the following chapter, an act made in the 13th and 14th year of Charles II. for the better relief of the poor, and continued by the legislature at different times since, and which was ultimately made perpetual by chapter the 18th of the

the

the 12th year of this reign ; and, by chapter 23d, all the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants, were also reduced into one act of parliament.

Neither does the subject seem, throughout this reign of war and conquest, to have occupied the attention of individuals ; no publication of any account having lived to the present day, except a letter to the parliament by the author of Robinson Crusoe, one of those very few books which the late Dr. Johnson said he had been able to read *without skipping*. Daniel Defoe, in 1704, chose to publish a declamatory epistle, addressed to the parliament, with the following title, *Giving Alms no Charity, and employing the Poor a Grievance to the Nation*.

In this publication he informs his readers, that Queen Elizabeth, in her progress through the kingdom, observing the vast throngs of poor flocking to see and bless her, being struck with the multitude, frequently exclaimed, *Pauper ubique jacet* ; and this truth, so tersely expressed by her, occasioned a continual study in her mind how to recover her people from poverty, and make their labour more profitable to themselves in particular, and the nation in general.

He lays down the following as fundamental maxims :

1. There is in England more labour than hands to perform it, and consequently a want of people, not of employment.

2. No man in England, of sound limbs and senses, can be poor merely from want of work.

3. All our work-houses, corporations, and charities, for employing the poor, and setting them to work, as now they are employed, or any acts of parliament to empower overseers of parishes, or parishes themselves, to employ the poor, except, as shall be hereafter excepted, are and will be public nuisances, mischiefs to the nation, which serve to the ruin of families, and the increase of the poor.

4. That

4. That it is a regulation of the poor that is wanted in England, not a setting them to work.

These maxims he professes to demonstrate, but does not entirely succeed in the attempt, although he makes some very sensible observations in the course of his argument on each of the heads.

Dearness of labour he advances as a proof of the first maxim ; and gives due praise to Elizabeth for what she did for the poor, particularly by encouraging the French manufactories, when the persecution under the Duke d'Alva drove them from the Netherlands ; and also by that excellent act of parliament, in the 43d year of her reign, so often alluded to.

The stress of his argument lies against employing the poor in work-houses, corporations, houses of correction, and the like ; because the method proposed to employ them is by spinning, weaving, and manufacturing our English wool ; manufactures of which are all exercised in England to their full extent, and rather beyond their vent than under it ; he, therefore, is of opinion, that, for every skein of worsted spun in one place, there must be one less spun elsewhere. He supposes a manufactory of baize to be erected in Bishopsgate-street ; unless a greater consumption can be found for more baize than were made before, for every piece made in London, there must be one less made at Colchester, and, therefore, this is not increase, but only transposition of manufacture.

The only thing to be done is, to introduce some foreign manufactory ; something which was not made here before.

He considers the poverty and exigence of the poor in England to be plainly derived from casualty or crime : by casualty he means sickness, loss of limbs, or sight, and any natural or accidental impotence.

The crimes of the poor, and whence their poverty is derived, as from visible and direct fountains, are luxury, pride, sloth. The pride of good husbandry is no English virtue : it
may

may have been imported ; and, in some places, it thrives well enough.

The English labouring-people eat and drink ; but, especially, drink three times as much in value as any foreigners.

He accuses us of being the most lazy *diligent nation* in the world. Among our poor there is a general taint of slothfulness, which distemper he conceives to be so epidemic and deep-rooted, that it is a question whether an act of parliament will reach it. The number of the poor is occasioned by the men *who will not work*, not by those *who can get no work* ; all the work-houses and overseers in England will not reach this case : but if such acts of parliament can be made, as will effectually cure the sloth and luxury of the poor ; will make drunkards take care of their wives and families ; spend-thrifts lay up for a wet day ; lazy fellows diligent ; and thoughtless, sottish, men careful and provident ; if this can be done, they will soon find work enough, and there will be less poverty among us : if it cannot be done, setting the poor to work on woollen manufactures, and thereby encroaching on those who now work at them, will ruin our trade, and increase the number of poor.

A bill, brought into parliament by Sir Humphry Mackworth, for employing the poor, which had passed the Commons with great approbation, gave rise to this tract. By this bill it was intended, as Mr. Chalmers, in his *Life of Defoe*, tells us, to support work-houses, in every parish, with parochial capitals, for carrying on parochial manufactures : but it was thrown out by the Peers ; to which, it is probable, this sensible pamphlet very much conduced ; in which he pretends, that he *could* propose a regulation of the poor, which would *put a stop to poverty, beggary, parish-charges, assessments, and the like* ; and promises to do so, when he has gone through the proof of his maxims ; but waves the performance, for this very inadequate reason, — because he will not presume to lead a body so august, so wise, and so capable, as the honourable assembly to whom the tract is dedicated.

There are, in this tract, many excellent observations, expressed with great dignity. That part, which tends to prove that giving alms is no charity, lays down some sensible maxims, on which he rests the strength of his argument, which tends to prove that parochial work-houses should not be encouraged for the purpose of parochial manufactures. After having proved that there is more work in the kingdom than hands to perform it, he asserts, that begging is a mere scandal: in the able, it is a scandal on their industry; in the impotent, upon their country. The poverty of England does not lie among craving beggars, but among poor families, where the children are numerous, and where death, or sickness, has deprived them of the labour of their father. An alms, ill-directed, may be charity to a particular person, but becomes an injury to the public.

That Mr. Defoe is right in these principles, there surely can be no doubt; and the truth, that we have *more work in the kingdom than hands to perform it*, comes home to, and establishes, another principle, — that the poor *should be trained to do all the work that the nation can find them*. Early habits of industry are most likely to effect this end; schools of industry must, therefore, be the means.

It surely is no despotic or slavish maxim, that the children of individuals are, in some respect, the children of the state. Republics, renowned for the freedom of their government, acted on this principle: *à fortiori*, the children of those who receive their maintenance, or any part of it, from the property of their fellow-citizens, by virtue of the ordinances of the state, are the children of the state, which, consequently, has a right to superintend their education.

Apply this principle to every individual who does not maintain his family, but has relief from the overseer: his children belong to the state: it is the duty of the state to take care that they turn out industrious subjects; and I am sure interest here well coalesces with duty: schools of industry are the means. The first section of 43d Elizabeth provides for their support. The end will

will be an industrious, moral, poor : a blessed contrast to the laziness and dissoluteness so much and so universally complained of.

L E T T E R . XVI.

IN the fifth year of George the First, the parliament empowered the church-wardens and overseers, by warrant from two justices, to seize so much of the goods and chattels, and receive so much of the annual rents and profits of the lands and tenements, of such husband, father, or mother, as shall run away, leaving their wives and children a burthen upon the parish, as the said two justices shall direct, towards the discharging the parish where such wife and child shall be left, and also for their future maintenance: this warrant to be confirmed at the quarter-sessions, where a warrant, also, for the sale of the goods, &c. must be obtained, before they can be disposed of ; and to which sessions the officers are to be accountable for the money raised.

Two years after this, it was the opinion of parliament, as declared in the preamble to an act for encouraging the woollen and silk manufactures, and more effectually employing the poor, " That it is most evident, the wearing of printed, painted, stained, and dyed, calicoes, in apparel, household-stuff, furniture, and otherwise, does manifestly tend to the detriment of the woollen and silk manufactures of this kingdom, and to the excessive increase of the poor ; and, if not effectually prevented, may be the utter ruin and destruction of the said manufactures, and of many thousands of his Majesty's subjects, and their families, whose livelihoods do entirely depend thereupon." It is therefore enacted, in the year 1720, that none shall wear any garment of printed callico, or any stuff made of cotton, or mixed therewith, which shall be painted,

under the penalty of 5*l.*; or use it in any household stuff or furniture, under the penalty of 20*l.*; and that no tradesman shall make up such furniture, under the same penalty.

This act is not taken notice of, on account of any effect it has at present in the management of the poor, but as introductory of an observation, necessary to be attended to, by those who would wish our statute-book to be a collection of efficient and practical regulations of police; and not, as it in fact is, an immense collection of contradictory, heterogeneous, ordinances, militating, in many instances, with each other; in many, with the principles of sound policy; and, in some, with the actual habit and practice of all his majesty's subjects, of which this statute is a remarkable, but no uncommon, instance.

No longer ago than the year 1720, this prohibition of calicoes and stuff, made of cotton, or mixed therewith, passed into a law; and, in 1790, and many years before, every woman in the kingdom is clothed in these very fabrics; most of our household-furniture is made of them; this prohibition still remaining the law of the land.

The woollen manufactures of this kingdom certainly deserve greater encouragement than either linen or cotton; because wool, the staple-commodity of England, is the produce of our own agriculture; hemp, flax, and cotton, are, at present, generally the product of *foreign* agriculture; and also because the fabric of the woollen manufacture is strong and warm, suited therefore to the use of the bulk of the people: that of cotton and linen, weak and thin, improper for labour and a northern climate. Woollen clothing does not require so much washing as our printed linens and white stockings, an article of great expense in poor families; but *the revenue* is thought to be a sufficient reason for these paradoxical absurdities; and, that the public treasury may abound, drunkenness, gaming, luxury, and ostentatious clothing, are encouraged, in open defiance of the laws of the land. Those magistrates would
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be very coolly thanked for a conscientious discharge of their duty, who, to promote sobriety, should lessen the number of ale-houses; to discourage gaming, should authorize the parish-officers to refuse relief to those who singly, or in clubs, buy lottery-chances; or, to promote the manufacture of wool, should encourage informations upon the act of parliament just alluded to; the prevailing and general maxim of financiers, in all times, is *rem facias*; the means are but a secondary object of their attention.

In the ninth year of this reign, the poor-laws again were an object of parliamentary attention, and an act for amending the laws relating to their settlements, employments, and relief, passed; which enacted, that no poor should be relieved, until an oath be made, before *one justice*, of a reasonable cause, and that the person hath applied to a vestry, or to two of the overseers, and been refused relief; a summons is also directed to the overseers, to shew cause why such relief should not be granted, before it is ordered; and, when ordered, the person's name is to be entered in a book to be kept for that purpose, as one who is to receive relief as long as the cause continues, and no longer; and no officer of any parish shall bring to account (except on sudden and emergent occasions) any money he shall have given to any poor person, who is not registered in such book, under the penalty of five pounds.

It has been suggested that one cause of the bad execution of the poor-laws is the constant superintending authority that the legislature has delegated to justices of the peace. Men eminent for their wisdom, and respectable for their opinions, have attributed much of the mischief experienced from this code of laws to the conduct of those who are the supervisors of their execution; nor is the complaint new: the great Sir Francis Bacon, it may be remembered, in the very infancy of the code, threw out an idea to this effect, when he made the distinction between what *was* done by the *distracted* government of justices of the peace, and what *might* be done by a settled ordinance; yet, whatever of ill may have accrued

in general from the superintending authority of magistrates, it has rather arisen from the *not using* their powers, than from either the *abuse* or *misuse* of them. In this particular instance, which respects the pecuniary assistance the poor are entitled to receive from the overseers, the interference of a magistrate appears peculiarly proper, when called to action by the complaint of the poor themselves; because the nearest magistrate has it in his power to inform himself of the real circumstances of the case, and, from his situation in life, is a proper check to any partiality, or improper, although natural, bias, the overseer who lives more immediately in the midst of the poor, and being frequently connected with them, by the different degrees of relationship, and generally as their immediate employer, may be influenced by; which motives operate to a greater degree in the distribution of assistance to the poor, than at first sight might be imagined, and which gave rise to objections of the most serious nature to Mr. Gilbert's Bill, and would have caused an opposition of the most obstinate kind from the yeomanry of this kingdom, had that bill passed into a law; which struck at the root of this power, to give away the money taken, in a great measure, immediately from the pockets of this large and valuable class of our countrymen.

Besides, it will be found, on inquiry, that the money distributed in the weekly list forms no very material proportion of the expenses of a parish;* and in the distribution of money there is no room for lucrative jobs, no knavish contracts for furnishing the various articles of consumption; and the overseer keeping a fair account can have no profit; and possibly as money is the common representative of all necessities of life, so it is the greatest, most convenient, and best appropriated, relief to the individual. It somewhat,

* This observation, I fear, ceases, from the pressure of the times, to be in general true at present, although it might be so in 1791.

in its universality of use, resembles Boniface's ale, — "A poor man and his family may eat it, drink it, and sleep upon it."

Church-wardens and overseers, with the consent of the major part of the parishioners in vestry assembled, are also, by this act, empowered to purchase or hire houses to lodge and employ the poor in, and there to keep, maintain, and employ, them: and such poor as refuse to be lodged, maintained, and employed, there, shall not be entitled to relief; parishes are also empowered to join in such purchase, and the officers of one parish may, for that purpose, contract with those of another; but the *settlement* of the poor is not to be affected by their removal to another parish, in consequence of this act.

The acquisition of settlement by purchase is regulated by another section of the act, which directs, that the purchase-money must not be less than thirty pounds *bona fide* paid for the estate, by which a person shall gain a settlement; and that no person, paying to the scavengers or highway rates, shall, on that account, be deemed to gain a settlement: the other sections regulate the notices necessary on appeals, and the relief the appellant shall receive on undue removals.

I have not been able to obtain any tract on the subject written during this reign; nor have I seen any referred to, or quoted, by those which have been since written; the conclusion which follows is, that none of sufficient merit, to escape oblivion, were published; and indeed the little that was done by the legislature is a proof that the subject did not much attract the attention of the nation; that venerable fabric, the 43d of Elizabeth, received a little addition and repairs only, but no material alteration was made.

L E T T E R XVII.

IT is with great satisfaction, that the opinion of Mr. Locke on this subject, alluded to a few pages back, has been perused; by which it appears, that about the year 1696, the clamour, with regard to the poor, and the burthen of the poor's rate, having attracted the notice of the Commons, they referred it to the Board of Trade to consider the fact, and to report the remedy: on which occasion Mr. Locke, who was one of the commissioners, delivers the following opinion in the report made by the board: * — “ The multiplicity of the poor, and the increase of the tax for their maintenance, is so general an observation and complaint, that it cannot be doubted of; nor has it been only since the last war that this evil has come upon us, it has been a growing burthen on the kingdom these many years, and the two last reigns felt the increase of it as well as the present. If the causes of this evil be looked into, we humbly conceive it will be found to have proceeded, *not from the scarcity of provisions,† nor want of employment for the poor*, since the goodness of God has blessed these times with plenty no less than the former, and a long peace, during three reigns, gave us as plentiful a trade as ever. The growth of the poor must therefore have some other cause; and it can be nothing else but *the relaxation of discipline and corruption; virtue and industry* being as constant companions on the one side, as *vice and idleness* are on the other. On this first principle, thus clearly expressed by Mr. Locke, whose strong intellectual faculties were employed in the exact situation, to obtain ample intelligence, on the subject he

* Mr. Chalmers's Estimate, &c.

† By the Windfor-table, the price of wheat, in the years 1696, 1697, 1698, was 3*l.* 3*s.* 1*d.* — 2*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* — 3*l.* 9*s.*

has thrown such a blaze of light over, one must rest with confidence; in fact, this truth has often discovered itself to us, in faint glimmerings, during the investigation of this subject; and the reader may have perceived how often this sentiment has obtruded itself on the pen. That it meets with such honourable confirmation from Mr. Locke's authority, near a hundred years ago, stamps a signal mark of propriety on the ideas which have been hitherto suggested; and firmly establishes the following assertion, that, unless vice and idleness among our poor are *decreased* since this opinion was given, the multiplicity of the poor, and the still increasing burthen of tax for their maintenance, arises at the end of the eighteenth century, not from scarcity of provisions, and want of employment for the poor, but from relaxation of discipline and corruption of morals.

As it is possible that the remedy for the disease may be discovered by pursuing the inquiry, with equal clearness, as the cause has been pointed out; we shall proceed in the same manner to relate what the legislature has done, and individuals have written, on the subject to the close of the last parliament.

The law, with respect to natural children, remained on the footing the acts of the 18th of Elizabeth and the 7th of James the First had left the subject; until the sixth year of the reign of George the Second, when, it having been found by long experience that the security of parishes was not sufficiently provided for, the legislature, by a statute then passed, in the 31st chapter, enacted, that the person charged on oath of being the father of a bastard-child, by any single woman who shall be delivered, or shall declare herself to be pregnant, and that the child is likely to become chargeable to the parish, shall be immediately apprehended and committed to prison, unless he gives security to indemnify the parish; but that he shall be discharged on the miscarriage of the woman, or if no order be made in pursuance of the 18th of Elizabeth within six weeks after the woman's delivery; and that no

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woman

woman shall *involuntarily* be obliged to filiate the child of which she is pregnant, before delivery.

It seems also to have been a doubt, whether justices of the peace could legally act in any case relating to parishes where such justices have property ; from this, some inconvenience arose in the administration of the common business of a magistrate : the 18th chapter of the 16th statute of this reign, therefore, clears up the subject, and empowers them to enforce the laws, with respect to the maintenance, relief, and settlement, of poor persons ; those also with respect to passing vagrants, repairs of highways, and any other laws concerning parochial taxes or rates ; notwithstanding they themselves may be chargeable to such rates.

The following year produces an instance of the attention the legislature paid to the conduct of the overseers of the poor ; who, according to the preamble of the act of the 17th Geo. II. cap. 3. “ on frivolous pretences, and private ends, frequently make unjust and illegal rates, in a secret and clandestine manner :” and the preamble to the 38th chapter of the same statute states, “ that the money raised for the relief of the poor is liable to be misapplied, after it is, with great difficulty and delay, raised.” To obviate these inconveniences, the first act directs, that public notice shall be given in the church of every rate, for the relief of the poor, the next Sunday after the same shall be allowed by the justices ; and that the overseers shall permit such rates to be inspected at all reasonable times, on payment of 1s. for the same, and copies shall, on demand, be given, allowing 6d. for every twenty-four names ; the rate to be void if no such notice be given, and a penalty of 20s. on refusal of such inspection, or copy ; and the 38th chapter directs “ that the church-wardens and overseers of the poor shall yearly, within fourteen days after other overseers shall be appointed, deliver a just, true, and perfect account, in writing, fairly entered in a book to be kept for that purpose, and signed by the said church-wardens and overseers, of all the sums of money received, or rated
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and not received; and also of all goods, chattels, stock, and materials, that shall be in their hands, or in the hands of the poor, in order to be wrought; and of all moneys paid by such church-wardens and overseers, and of all other things concerning the said office; and shall pay and deliver over all sums of money, goods and chattels, and other things, as shall be in their hands, unto the succeeding overseers; and that this account shall be verified on oath before one or more magistrates, who shall also sign the said account, without fee; and this book shall be carefully preserved; and all persons liable to be assessed shall be permitted to inspect it, on payment of 6*d.* and copies shall be given also on demand, on payment of 6*d.* for every 300 words. In case of the death of an overseer, two justices are to choose another; if an overseer remove from the parish, his account, testified as above, shall be delivered to the remaining overseer or church-warden; and the representatives of an overseer shall account within forty days after his decease. Appeals to any rates or assessments, reasonable notice being given, lie to the next general or quarter sessions of the peace; where, if the whole rate be appealed to, the justices may quash it, and order the church-wardens and overseers to make a new one; but, where just cause is seen, to give relief only, by altering the rate, the justices are empowered to amend the rate, in such a manner as shall be necessary to such relief only.

As great care is taken by this act, that the rates shall be fair and equal, and that the parish-officers shall discharge their respective offices honestly; so does it provide against any vexatious actions being brought against them, by declaring that no want of form, either in the appointment of overseers, the rate or assessment, or in the distress, shall render them unlawful; nor shall the parties distraining be accounted trespassers, *ab initio*, on account of any irregularity in their proceedings, but the parties aggrieved shall recover for the special damage sustained by such irregularity.

Succeeding overseers are also enabled to levy any arrears due to former overseers; and, in case of persons removing out of parishes, and others coming in, they shall pay their rates in proportion to the time they have respectively occupied; the proportion to be ascertained by two or more magistrates, and recovered by distress.

Copies of the assessments are also directed to be entered in a book, to be kept for public perusal; the entry to be made within fourteen days after the appeal is determined; and all the regulations in the act are enforced by a penalty not exceeding 5*l.*; and the power of overseers, in places where there are no church-wardens, is declared to be the same, as where they are both church-wardens and overseers; and they are subjected to the same penalties.

The section of this act, which directs the overseers account to be verified on oath before a magistrate, seems not sufficiently to have explained, whether the magistrate is to examine the accounts, article by article; or whether the overseer is to swear to the whole account only, by the lump, and is not obliged to go through an examination, with respect to the articles of his account, on an oath *voir dire*: if this is the case, the magistrate acts officially only, and the oath is but of little service, as an appeal lies to the quarter-sessions.

The 11th chapter of the 31st statute of this reign makes some regulations in the settlement of apprentices; and enacts, that a person bound apprentice, by any deed, writing, or contract, duly stamped, shall be entitled to a settlement where he is so bound and has served: the other section of the act relates to the power given to justices, in settling disputes between master and servants, and consequently comes not under the scope of our present disquisition.

The last act of parliament in this reign, which respects the poor, is statute 32, chapter 22, which provides for the maintenance of the wives and families of militia-men, when in actual service, by directing that the overseers shall pay from the poor's rate, by order of one justice of the peace, a weekly allowance to the distressed families

families of militia-men, embodied, and called out into actual service, according to the usual price of labour in husbandry within the county or district, by the following rule: for one child, under ten years, one day's labour; for two, under the same age, two days labour; for three children, three days labour; for five, or more, four days labour; and for the wife, one day's labour: but that the families of those, only, chosen by *lot*, and not *substitutes*, shall be entitled to this allowance; for which payment the overseers are to be reimbursed out of the county-stock.

To pass over the statute-book of this reign, without mentioning the vagrant-act, the 17th Geo. II. cap. 5. would appear an instance of inattention to the general design of these papers; although much the greatest part of it affords no insight to the subject, because it in general respects the treatment of those who have *forfeited the protection of society*, and are to be considered as its *outcasts*: but if, through the fault of an improper system of legislation, or through the mal-administration of the laws which are in force respecting the poor, the number of those, who come under the description of vagrants, is increased; the laws themselves, or the execution of them, have thrown out of the protection of society a number of people who are not vagrants from their own fault; and, so far, the laws themselves are accountable for the mischief which they have occasioned; while the punishment, severe to excess, falls on unoffending individuals. In enumerating the particular offences which occasion persons to be classed under the description of *idle* and *disorderly* persons, whom one justice may commit to the house of correction, to hard labour, for a month, are those who *threaten* to run away, and leave their wives and children to the parish. This is a *curious* offence, certainly not a *heinous* one, for it may consist in words only, unaccompanied with acts or intentions; but for this they may be committed; and, if they resist the commitment, or escape, are instantly to be classed among rogues and vagabonds.

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All persons who return to the parish whence they have been removed, without a certificate, stand in the same predicament: the law of settlements, therefore, tends to increase the number of rogues and vagabonds.

All persons who have not wherewithal to live idle, without employment, and refuse to work at the common usual wages given to other labourers, in the like work, in the parish wherein they then live, are also liable to the same punishments, and to become vagrants.

An industrious handicraftsman, who has maintained his wife and family creditably and honestly, by his industry, if removed, from the town where his trade is carried on, to his place of settlement, a village, where there is no employment but in husbandry, must, of necessity, fall under this description; because, not being able, from different habits to those of a labourer, to do a fair day's work, he will not easily find employment. A man does not give up a portion of his natural liberty, and his only property, his ability to earn his bread, for this kind of protection from the social compact. This also arises, in a great measure, from the law of settlements.

All persons who run away, and leave their wives and families, whereby they become chargeable to any parish, are, *ipso facto*, to be deemed rogues and vagabonds; whose punishment is immediate commitment, until the quarter-sessions: then they are liable to be committed to hard labour, for a time not exceeding six months; and, during their confinement, to be corrected by whipping.

In this instance, also, the crime against society may not be sufficiently serious to deserve so severe a punishment. Until a poor person, his wife, or family, has become chargeable to a parish, the restraining him from leaving his home, by the fear of so rigorous a sentence, does not arise absolutely from necessity, and therefore the restraint is not justifiable, on principles of common justice.

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The *possible* event, which may come to pass from his leaving them, should not, therefore, in the first instance, class him among rogues and vagabonds. He should not be deemed an outcast of society, by anticipation of evil: he should have first been a *pensioner* on the public fund of charity, before he should, by so severe a law, be restrained of his liberty. This description of the crime, therefore, is too comprehensive, and occasions many innocent subjects to be classed with, and be subjected to, the punishment appropriated to rogues and vagabonds.

With but a superficial knowledge of the subject, were these strictures, on the situation of our poor, at first undertaken. The purpose was, to investigate, and point out, the cause of that vast expense, which every rank of society, with reason, complains of, in maintaining this numerous class of our fellow-subjects; and to explain the true foundation of that very wretched situation in which we see too many of them; in fact, to account for this striking paradox, — that, while millions sterling are expended in their relief, millions of the poor still stand in need of more relief than they receive. A distant gleam of hope occurred, also, to the mind, that, by investigating the cause of the evil, possibly the remedy might also be discovered. The method chosen was that of fixing a foundation, in the first principles of society, and proceeding by an historical analysis: this has laid me open to some apparent contradictions and mistakes; these letters being sent to the press, as fresh information gave fresh matter, and enabled the writer to proceed in developing the history of the poor, the laws respecting them, and the opinions of those who have turned their attention to the subject; which mistakes might have been avoided by a different mode of proceeding: but then the communication could not have been prepared for that very useful periodical magazine of agricultural intelligence in which it first appeared: besides, probably, by this means of treating the subject, dogmatic principles or preconceived opinions are avoided; they, at least, have less time to establish themselves.

themselves. The mind, which confesses itself to be employed in obtaining information, is not likely to deal in dogmas; and, when the professed purpose is to digest annals, as a means of arriving at a truth, it would be an aberration, indeed, to attempt the establishment of a system.

L E T T E R XVIII.

UNTIL the establishment of literary reviews, the writer of the fugitive piece of the day possessed but little chance of posthumous reputation. His fame resembled the life of the ephemeron in duration, as did the production of his ingenuity that insect by insignificance; both soon perished, and were alike forgotten: unless extraordinary merit, or chance, preserved the one, in the libraries of the learned; and scarcity, or beauty, the other, in the collections of the naturalist.

But few treatises on this subject, written in the early part of the late reign, are now to be found in the shops of the booksellers. Mr. Hay,* a member of the House of Commons, published, in 1735, some remarks on the laws relating to the poor, with proposals for their better relief and employment. These proposals were reduced into the form of an act, and brought into the House the same year the pamphlet appeared, but did not pass into a law. Among other remarks may be found, in his publication, the following judicious observations:

“ It is certain, that the obligation on each parish to maintain its own poor, and the consequence of that, a distinct interest, are the roots from which every evil relating to the poor hath sprung, and

* Of Glynd, in Suffex, author of an agreeable Essay on Deformity.

which

which ever must grow up until they are eradicated. Every parish is in a state of expensive war with all the rest of the nation, regards the poor of all other places as aliens, and cares not what becomes of them, if it can but banish them from its own society. No good, therefore, is ever to be expected till parochial interest is destroyed, till the poor are taken out of the hands of the overseers, and put under the management of persons wiser and more disinterested, and until they be set to work on a *national*, or at least a *provincial*, fund, to arise from benefactions, and the labour of the poor, as far as they will go; and what more is wanting to be levied by an equal tax."

On this principle, he proposes, that every person be deemed legally settled in the parish where he has continued a year, without being chargeable; and, if he has gained no such settlement, then at the place of his birth; and, if not born in the kingdom, then where he should want relief.

The heads of the bill, which was rejected, proceeded principally on this idea, and consisted chiefly of a plan for a county or district work-house, if the county should be too large; to be maintained by an equal rate throughout the county, to be governed by twelve persons residing in each district, possessed of a certain estate in land, to be drawn by lot at the quarter-sessions, and incorporated by the name of the guardians of the poor within the district; six of them annually to go out, and six new ones to be chosen in the same manner; benefactors to be guardians for the time being, in proportion to the sum given. They should be enabled to purchase lands, in fee, near the middle of the county or district, thereon to erect buildings for the use of the poor; to furnish and provide stock to set the poor at work. To this plan many regulations are annexed, which, as it never passed into a law, it is unnecessary to transcribe them, or any of his reasons for them.

From this period until 1751, no other publication on this subject has come to hand; and, in that year, Mr. Henry Fielding, as

well known to us in these days for his excellent novels, replete with nature, mirth, and pathos, as he was in those for his excellence as a magistrate, published "An Inquiry into the Cause of the late Increase of Robbers, &c. with some Proposals for remedying the growing Evil." This treatise is full of observations, worthy a man of his abilities and intimate knowledge, from extensive experience, as a Middlesex magistrate, of this important subject; a few of his leading principles, as far as they relate to our present inquiry, shall be given.

After having investigated the nature of the *constitution* of his country, as far it relates to the subject-matter, and explained what he intends by the word *constitution*, he divides the subjects of the realm into three orders, — the nobility, the gentry, and the commonalty: the last division he asserts to be vastly changed from what they were in the days of vassalage, and conceives this change to have arisen chiefly from commerce, which has superinduced an almost unbounded liberty or licentiousness, and a vast addition of power, to that class of people; while, in the mean time, the civil power having decreased in the same proportion, the *laws, as at present administered*, are not able to govern them.

The subject of the first section is, the too frequent and expensive diversions of which the lower class of people partake; this, he says, is one cause of thefts and robberies.

In the second section, he considers drunkenness as a vice which the legislature has been particularly careful to suppress, and that the only blame in this case rests in the remissness with which these wholesome laws have been executed; and adds, "Although I will not undertake to defend the magistrates of former days, who have surely been guilty of some neglect of their duty, yet, in behalf of the present commissioners of the peace, the case is different; they are very different offices, to execute a new or a well-known law, or to revive one which is obsolete. In the case of a known law, custom brings men to submission; and, in all new provisions, the
ill-will,

ill-will, if any, is levelled at the legislature, who are much more able to support it than a few magistrates." He then expatiates on the terrible consequences arising from drunkenness, acquired by drinking the strongest intoxicating liquors, and particularly gin; and, in a fine spirit of prophecy, foretels the fatal consequences flowing to posterity from this pernicious practice. "Doth not this polluted source, instead of producing servants for the husbandman and artificer, instead of providing recruits for the sea or the field, promise only to fill alms-houses and hospitals, and to infect the streets with stench and diseases?"

The third section is on gaming, but as this vice has not, at present, been so directly the cause of the increase of the poor's rates, as it has of thefts and robberies, and is not, except in the shape of an annual lottery, so likely to tempt the inhabitants of the country as of crowded cities, our author's observations on this vice need not be recapitulated.

The fourth section contains a review of the laws relating to the poor; and, having before run over the consequences of luxury among the lower classes of people, in the instances of diversions, drunkenness, and gaming, as tending to promote their distresses, he considers the improper regulation of the poor as a second cause of thefts and robberies; this, he thinks, proceeds from three sources,—the abuse of some laws, the total neglect of others, and somewhat from a defect in the laws themselves. He adds, that it must be matter of astonishment to any man to reflect, that, in a country where the poor are, beyond all comparison, more liberally provided for than in any other part of the world, there should be found more beggars, more miserable distressed objects, than are to be seen throughout all the states of Europe.

The other sections in this tract relating only to the subject immediately under his consideration, and not affecting our present inquiry, no farther extracts shall be given of the publication.

We now proceed to a name known to all the civilized world, and the particular boast of this island; not as a legislator, not as a magistrate, but as a poet and a pleasant moralist.

A pamphlet, entitled, "A compendious or briefe Examination of certaine ordinary Complaints of diverse of our Countrymen in these our Dayes, by William Shakespeare, Gentleman," imprinted in 1581, was reprinted in 1751 in London.

The Monthly Review, a valuable collection of criticism on and repository of most that is worth notice in the literary productions of the last forty years, preserved the republication of this pamphlet to my notice, which certainly, with respect to the remote date of its original publication, should have stood foremost in the list of tracts on the poor; it being written anterior to the great cornerstone of the poor-laws, the 43d of Elizabeth, and to the principle of which it might have afforded a valuable hint.

Although in 1751, when this tract was reprinted, the fame of Shakespeare had not risen to that stupendous height in the opinion of mankind it now possesses; nor had the anecdotes of his life, and criticism on his beauties and defects, swelled to such a bulk as they have since arrived at, through the ingenious comments of Johnson, Farmer, Stephens, Malone, and others; yet one should have imagined that enough had been known of the poet, from Rowe's life of him, to have precluded a possibility of mistaking William Shakespeare, the author of this tract, for our renowned poet: this pamphlet being printed in 1581, when, by the parish-register of Stratford, Shakespeare was not above seventeen years of age, and more probably engaged in the truant pleasures of youth than in writing a serious dialogue between a doctor of divinity, a merchant, a husbandman, and a capper;* in the handling of which, the reviewers say, the author discovers a much greater knowledge of trade and commerce than people would be apt to expect from a

* Capper, one who makes and sell caps. JOHNSON.

poet. The depth of observation and knowledge of mankind, as well as of trade and commerce, which was possessed by the writer of this tract, whoever he may have been, may be conceived from the following quotation from it, which appears to strike deeper at the principle of the poor-laws, as far as it respects *compulsive* industry, than any other argument which has fallen under my recollection.

“ It is an old saying in Latin, *bonos alit artes*, that is to say, profit or advancement nourisheth every faculty; which saying is so true, that it is allowed by the common judgement of all men. We must understand also, that all things that should be done in a commonwealth be not to be constrained by the straight penalties of the law; but some so, and some either by allurements, and rewardes rather. For what law can compel men to be industrious in travayle, or labour of body; or studious to learne any science or knowledge of the minde: to these things they may well be provoked, encouraged, and allured, if they that be industrious and painful be rewarded well for their paines, and be suffered to take gaynes and wealth as rewardes of their labours, and so, likewise, they, that be learned, be advanced, and honoured, according to their forwardness in learning; every body will then study to be industrious in bodily labour, or studious in things that pertain to knowledge. Take these rewardes away from them, and go about to compel them by laws thereto, what man will plough or dig the ground, or exercise any manual arte, wherein is any paine?”

As every act of parliament, respecting the poor, proceeds on a principle of compulsion *only*, and is not intermixed with rewards or encouragement incitive to industry, the present system of laws militates with this humane and sensible observation of Mr. William Shakespeare; and it may be the price of our labour, in a future part of this inquiry, to consider whether the principle of the poor-laws would not be meliorated by intermixing allurements to industry with compulsion; but, as the chief scope in this pamphlet

was

was to recommend the manufacturing our own wearing-apparel, instead of going to a foreign market, for our own materials worked up by foreigners; a question which seems to have excited the attention of the sensible part of the nation, a few years after the Duke d'Alva's severities had driven manufactures and commerce from the Spanish Netherlands into this island; the tract itself contains little more on our subject worth transcribing.

Towards the end of 1751, an anonymous publication made its appearance, entitled, " Considerations on several Proposals for the better Maintenance of the Poor : " the author's design is, to prove that the present system is sufficient, if properly executed; and with great reason is he averse to leaving the poor to be maintained by voluntary contribution, or accidental charity only; because they, having now, for near two hundred years, been maintained by a regular system of laws, enforcing contribution, thousands would perish, trade would greatly suffer, and much confusion would arise from such a total change of system; he thinks, that the division into parishes is sufficiently large; because a multitude can be best governed by a division into subordinate parts; and conceives, that the internal police was better regulated when the counties were divided into hundreds, these hundreds into decennaries, and each man of the decenary was answerable for the rest; he proposes a more strict inspection into the conduct of the poor, and of ale-houses, by the constables of the district, who should make regular weekly returns to the high-constables, and these to make monthly returns to the justices at their petty sessions: on the whole, there appears to be much good sense, knowledge of, and attention to, the principles of the constitution in this tract.

L E T T E R XIX.

EARLY in the year 1752, Thomas Alcock, A. M. gives his opinion on the subject, and professes himself highly dissatisfied with the manner of providing for the poor : he dislikes *compulsive relief*, and thinks it hath a tendency to hurt industry, care, and frugality ; the sluggard, on the presumption that he hath a right to relief, is tempted to continue in sloth ; and the glutton as he receives his gains eats them, and the drunkard drinks them ; in short, men labour less, and spend more ; and the very law that provides for the poor increases the number of the poor : compulsion to relieve, he says, is contrary to the principle of charity, and destroys gratitude in the receivers, creates ill blood, murmuring, and indignation, on the side of the contributor : “ it must be allowed, therefore, that the poor-law tends to destroy charity, especially when the legal exaction is so very high, that no less a sum than *three millions yearly*, at a medium, is levied for this purpose, which is equal to a land-tax at six shillings in the pound ; add to this, that the shameless, the impudent, the idle, and least deserving, run away with this vast sum ; while the modest, the bashful, and really indigent, are suffered to languish in the most distressful circumstances imaginable.”

It is impossible in this place to avoid observing upon the fact stated, that *three millions were raised by legal exaction yearly, about the year 1751*, for the poor ; or, in other words, that the poor's rate at that time amounted to three millions yearly ; the fact appears to be questionable ; but, as the account of the poor's rates, returned by the different parishes throughout the kingdom, does not go back to this period, and no other proof to the contrary can be at present advanced, Mr. Alcock must be allowed credit for the assertion, that three millions were raised by the poor's rate annually,
about

about the year 1751; because, the nature of his argument, as well as the pointed expression, *legal exaction*, preclude the idea of his mixing the numerous charitable funds and contributions throughout the kingdom to swell the produce to that enormous sum.

Now, the Windsor-table of the prices of wheat, which has been once before referred to, states the price, in 1750, at 1*l.* 8*s.* 10*d.* a quarter; and, in 1751, at 1*l.* 14*s.* 2*d.*; in 1785, at 1*l.* 16*s.* 11*d.*: but, by the overseers' returns to the House of Commons, the poor's rate, in 1785, amounted only to 2,184,904*l.*: the expenses of the poor were, therefore, less in that year, than in 1750, above 800,000*l.* and wheat 8*s.* a quarter more; another proof that the price of bread increasing has not been the cause of an increase in the poor's rate.*

It would extend this inquiry to a tedious length, if every scheme which has been offered in print, on the maintenance and employment of the poor, were to be detailed. Mr. Alcock, whose language is rather declamatory than argumentative, likewise offers his plan; the intent of which is, to relieve the indigent, without oppressing the public in such an intolerable manner. He is not for *repealing* the poor-laws, but only for *amending* them; and, among other matters, proposes a plan of hundred work-houses, to consist of three parts; one for the impotent, the able, and the industrious poor; the second for the sick; and the third for the vagrant and idle poor; to be built and furnished at the expense of the several parishes, in proportion to what they paid, at a medium, for maintaining the poor, the last four years. The overseers of the parishes to be governors thereof, annually, by rotation; and all persons that

* In 1680, a regular estimate was made of the poor's rate, and it amounted to 665,362*l.*; and, in 1772, it amounted to 3,000,000*l.*: in 1680, wheat was 2*l.* a quarter; in 1772, it was 2*l.* 15*s.* 1*d.*: here the price of wheat is increased little more than one-third, and the rates more than quadrupled. ANNUAL REGISTER, 1773.

beg, or ask relief, to be sent to this house, and immediately admitted, on an order signed by the overseers of the respective parishes; and no money, but what passed through this house, to be charged to the parish by the overseers.

The subject seems now to have attracted the attention of some enlightened minds among the higher orders in the state. The Earl of Hillsborough and Sir Richard Lloyd drew up two separate plans into the form of an act of parliament, but neither of them passed into a law.

The Earl, by his plan, printed in 1753, proposes to repeal all the poor-laws, and to destroy every idea of settlements and removals; and to re-enact, with some alterations, the clauses appointing overseers, the mode of levying a rate, the laws respecting bastard-children, binding apprentices, rendering parents and children mutually liable to maintain each other; and proposes, that, in every county, there shall be one corporation, consisting of such persons who shall subscribe, and pay, annually, not less than 5*l.* towards the relief of the poor of the county, who shall be called governors of the poor, and who may purchase lands, make bye-laws, appoint officers, &c. with salaries.

That one or two hospitals be erected in every county: in these hospitals to be three distinct apartments, for the children, the aged, the diseased. The charges of the building, furniture, and materials, to be paid out of the contributions, and out of such money as may be granted for that purpose by parliament, and out of an assessment, for two years, of 3*d.* in the pound, annually, and an assessment of 6*d.* in the pound for maintaining the poor admitted into these hospitals: the profits of any work done in them, also, to be added to the revenue of the hospital.

Many good rules are also given by the Earl for the internal regulation of these hospitals, but of too minute a nature to render a transcription of them necessary.

Sir Richard Lloyd's plan principally consists of a house of industry for the education of the children of the poor.* It is astonishing that nearly forty years should have elapsed since a name of some eminence has recommended such an institution, and, except part of Lincolnshire, no other considerable division of the island has carried the idea into execution, although many individuals have shewn that the plan is feasible; and experience has now seconded the strongest convictions of its excellence which human reason alone was able to give. Sunday-schools, which should be, as it were, the apex of the structure, the last finish of the plan, will, it is to be hoped, now be made use of as the ground-work: and, while charity, uniting with religion, influences us to take care of the religious sentiment of the rising generation of the poor, by instructing them in learning and the duties they owe to God and man on a *Sunday*, let the good principles, the patrons of these institutions are actuated by, influence them to attend to the industrious habits of their young pupils through the other days of the week.

This scheme of Sir Richard's recites, that, whereas the education of the children of the poor cannot be so well effected, nor the poor be so comfortably, nor at so easy a price, maintained in small numbers, and in distinct families, as in large and well-ordered houses set apart for that purpose, therefore the justices, in sessions, shall divide the county into as many districts as they shall think proper; and that they, and also other persons of considerable estate shall be chosen as jurors, are, and shall be, guardians of the poor within each district; and persons contributing a certain

* The Memoir of the Board of Trade, drawn up by Mr. Locke, had not, at this time, fallen into my hands; and, when this was written, it was not generally known that the Memoir existed entire; only detached parts of it had been quoted. The last edition of an Account of the Society for promoting Industry in the County of Lincoln has, by the permission of John Pownall, Esq. been the means of making the whole of this important paper public.

sum shall be also guardians: they shall be a body-corporate, shall make bye-laws, appoint officers and servants, and form themselves into committees; shall purchase land, on which to build a house of industry, and other convenient buildings, for lodging and employing the poor within the district: the expense to be defrayed by a lottery, by voluntary contributors, and by an assessment: the charges, for the relief and employment of the poor, afterwards, to be raised by an assessment on the several parishes, in proportion to the number of poor they send to the house.

No other alteration is proposed to be made in the poor-laws, nor does this plan provide any compulsive means to oblige the poor to send their children to the house of industry: on the whole, it appears a very crude and indigested scheme.

Mr. Fielding, in a pamphlet, entitled, "A Proposal for making an effectual Provision for the Poor," printed in 1753, again offers his advice on the subject, and proposes a scheme, which seems, in Dr. Burn's opinion, as supplementary to the two last-mentioned.

Speaking of the necessity of some regulations, he says, that "the poor are a very great burthen, and even a nuisance, to the kingdom; that the laws for relieving their distresses, and restraining their vices, have not answered their purposes, and, at present, that they are very ill provided for, and worse governed, are truths which every man will acknowledge; and that every man who hath any property must feel the weight of that tax, which is levied for the use of the poor; and every person, who hath any understanding, must see how absurdly it is applied. So very useless, indeed, is this heavy tax, and so wretched its disposition, that it is a question whether the poor or the rich are actually more dissatisfied, or have indeed greatest reason to be so, since the plunder of the one serves so little to the real advantage of the other. The *sufferings* of the poor are, indeed, less known than their *misdeeds*, and therefore we are less apt to pity them! They starve, and

freeze, and rot, among themselves ; but they beg, and steal, and rob, among their betters."

He then proposes a plan for the county of Middlesex, which, if successful, may be followed in other counties ; but gives it, as his opinion, that no division, less than a whole county, will answer the intention. The heads of which are :

That there be a large building erected, consisting of three courts. The two outermost of the courts to be called the *county-house*, and the innermost to be called the *county-house of correction*, with a chapel, and offices.

That, in these houses, the men and women be kept entirely separate from each other.

That the county-house shall consist of lodgings for the officers ; of lodging-rooms, and of working-rooms, for the labourers ; of an infirmary ; of a chapel ; of several large store-rooms, with cellarage.

That the county-house of correction consist of lodging-rooms for the officers ; of lodging-rooms, and working-rooms, for the prisoners ; of an infirmary ; of a *fasting-room* ; of several cells, or dungeons ; of a large room, with iron grates, which shall be contiguous to, and look into, the chapel.

That there shall be a house for the governor, one for the deputy-governor, one for the chaplain, one for the treasurer, and one for the receiver-general of the house ; and that likewise there be built, on each side of the county-house, nine houses, for providing the labourers and prisoners with the necessaries of life.

These, with many other less important, regulations are the whole of Mr. Fielding's plan ; on which, and also on his ideas on the subject of the poor, the following observations shall be ventured :

That they are collected from an intimate knowledge of the wretchedness and villany which prevail among the lowest class of our fellow-creatures, in the purlieus of an overgrown metropolis.

polis. That the picture which he draws of them is too overcharged ; the outline too hard ; and, it is to be hoped, it is rather a caricature of the sink of wretchedness in London, than a natural representation of country-manners, even in those families where laziness and debauchery are in league with poverty, to render human misery complete. His plan is also of a piece with his picture ; therefore, we read of dungeons, cells, iron grates, and fasting-rooms ; although he, indeed, apologizes for the last, on the experience of their good effect in bridewells, and other houses of correction ; but, besides all this, the expense attending building such large offices, together with houses for about half-a-dozen officers, and consequently salaries, that they may be able to live in their houses, is such an expense as would startle any county, although Middlesex should have set a successful example.

It does not appear that the legislature, in consequence of the reasoning and plans detailed in these ingenious tracts, made any alterations in the statute-law of the kingdom. The arguments, as well as the plan, fell to the ground, not having made a sufficient impression on the mind of parliament to occasion any of them to pass into a law, although seconded by the weight of no mean ability and by the influence of men of considerable consequence, the vagrant-act, and that which respects the regulation of the poor's rate, being the only acts, on this head of internal police, which passed until towards the close of the reign of our late king ; and the date of these acts is anterior to the pamphlets which have just been noticed.

The multitude of instances, affecting to humanity and decency, which arose from the depravity and wretchedness of the numerous prostitutes who haunt the streets of the metropolis, occasioned, about the year 1758, some gentlemen, of equal generosity as humanity, to enter into a subscription, which laid the foundation of the Magdalen-House. The subject becoming a fashionable topic of conversation, many arguments on the good which might be expected

to

to arise from such an institution were held, and many plans were offered; among others, a plan for establishing charity-houses for exposed and deserted women and girls, and for penitent prostitutes; together with considerations, relating to the poor and poor-laws of England, were written, in 1758, by J. Massée, who appears to have been, on other subjects as well as this, a well-meaning and enlightened projector. The principal part of this publication was occupied on these institutions, and consequently not in point with our inquiry; but he also threw out some sensible hints on the subject of the poor and the poor-laws: of these it will be proper to take some notice.

He asserts, that the great increase of unemployed poor is owing to parochial settlements, and that the increase of thieves, beggars, and prostitutes, is immediately caused by want of employment, and, in some measure, by want of proper provision for distressed working-people, when out of the parishes to which they belong; and partly to the severity of our poor-laws, in affixing the same punishment to begging as to stealing.

He apprehends, that monopolizing farms and the inclosure of common lands are among the causes of an increase of the poor.

He attempts also to prove, by authorities, that substantial people have decreased in number; and asserts, that our interior weakness, the precarious state of our trade, and the great increase of the poor, are primarily, or principally, caused by removing multitudes, from our *natural and fixed basis-land*, to the *artificial and fluctuating basis-trade*.

A new system is also proposed by him, for relieving, employing, and ordering, the poor, which he divides into ten propositions; of these only the first three shall be noticed, because these only are properly fundamental, and the rest in the nature of auxiliary regulations.

First, That the charge of maintaining the poor shall be equally borne by the wealthy and substantial inhabitants; that the same shall

shall be assessed by the rents of houses and lands, and that each person's quota be determined by a pound-rate on the full annual value or rent.

Secondly, That every poor person, wanting relief, shall be equally entitled thereto, in any city, town, parish, or extra-parochial place, without regarding where such person was born or had lived.

Thirdly, That a competent number of houses of maintenance and employ be established for the reception of all poor persons, within each county respectively.

With respect to these three propositions, the first leaves the principle of the poor's rate exactly as it is at present; the second is impracticable in the full extent intended; and the third lays a foundation for an immense expense in buildings.

In 1759, a short anonymous tract appeared, in which the writer gives it as his opinion, that the principles are false on which the poor-laws are founded; particularly this, that it is reasonable *every place* in the kingdom should maintain *its own poor*; and asserts, that they ought to be relieved where they are in want of relief, and be employed where they are most useful; and, to effect this, that the fund to support them be *national*, not *parochial*. This writer offers his plan also, and proposes, that all charities, hospitals, work-houses, &c. be ingrafted into a general plan for the relief of the poor; and the several members thereof be united into a corporate body, to take the appellation Sir Josiah Child gave them, and be called fathers of the poor.

There also were published, about this time, some well-intended tracts, which recommend decreasing the number and regulating the conduct of ale-houses; a very proper, nay a necessary, step towards a well-ordered internal police: ale-houses are undoubtedly at present a principal origin of the evil complained of; but it surely might be possible to restrain their bad tendency, and make them in one respect a convenience to the laborious poor; instead of putting it into the power of licensed ale-houses to draw every
sixpence

fixpence from their pockets and every good principle from their breasts; if, under the authority of the present subsisting laws, the magistrates would be more strict in restraining them from permitting *tippling*, and not license any ale-house where there was not kept a stock of beer constantly on sale to those, only, who carry it home, of a strength equal to common table-beer, and at a price which would allow of a moderate profit only. The authority of magistrates, over the conduct of those they license to keep ale-houses, is great indeed; and every exertion of their authority to preserve sobriety and regularity among the lower classes of the people, who are the principal customers to these shops of drunkenness, is in the strict line of their duty. The leading principle in the Court of King's Bench, which superintends the conduct of the magistracy of the kingdom, is favourable to such a strict discharge of office; and were they, in that discharge, rather to exceed, than fall short, of their legal authority, while the intention was right, that court would hold them blameless. It is only when interested views or selfish principles influence their conduct, that the Court of King's Bench reprimands and punishes magistrates.

L E T T E R XX.

WE are now arrived at an æra, when the arms of Great Britain were carrying its fame and dominion to the remotest parts of the globe: an æra, when this island, in prosperity, political consequence, and reputation, was, by many of its most sanguine patriots, conceived to have arisen to its acme: and when, by many, also, whose opinions carried weight with them, it was believed to have stretched its credit almost to its destruction; and, while it was rising in fame, to be sinking, in fact,

fact, under the immense load of its national debt : experience has now proved to us, that both these conceptions of our situation, formed at the commencement of the present reign, were equally removed from truth ; our prosperity and political consequence, now that above thirty years of his present Majesty's reign has passed over, continue to increase ; and above a hundred million has also been added to the national debt.

This is a paradox, which politicians may attempt to explain ; it respects our subject no farther, than as the internal happiness of the mass of individuals, who form the population of the kingdom, may be interested. Has *their* prosperity increased progressively with that of the state ? is a question of some importance ; if it has, our wars, our treaties, our taxes, the high political situation this kingdom now fills, have operated to general good ; they have increased the general stock of prosperity and happiness : but, if the reverse is fact ; if, among the mass of our fellow-subjects, more idleness, more dissipation, worse principles, worse habits, and their consequences, greater poverty and distress, prevail among them ; what is all our boasted greatness, our high name for wealth, prosperity, and political consequence, but a splendid pail, to conceal from view the hideous appearance of mortal wretchedness ?

That this is the case ; that the aggregate of misery is greater among the poor than it was ; that the axiom, *it has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished*, is to the full as true as ever was the same axiom when applied to the influence of the crown, no one who sees their present wretchedness, and knows the amount of the rates raised for their relief, will hesitate to allow ; and, while this remarkable sentence is applied to their *miserable situation*, with equal force will it apply to the *revenue* raised for their relief. — But what has the legislature done throughout this period to diminish their distress or our expenses ? Nothing, or next to nothing : the legislature has treated the subject as the physician, whose humanity exceeds his skill, treats his patient, whose case he despairs

of : he prescribes narcotic palliatives, and exerts his knowledge to render less painful that catastrophe which he cannot prevent.

That this apathy or inattention of parliament, to the situation of the poor, has not been exaggerated, will clearly appear by the following notices of the statutes which respect them, culled from a farrago of fourteen volumes of public legislative acts, containing above one thousand chapters, passed in thirty-one years of the present reign ; among which, the first fourteen years contain not a syllable upon the subject, except an act passed in the second year, cap. 22, which respects the metropolis only ; being an act for the keeping regular, uniform, and annual, registers of all parish-poor infants under a certain age, within the bills of mortality ; as a means of preserving the lives of infants under the age of four years.

But local inconvenience and distress have nevertheless, during this period, occasioned many districts, hundreds, and parishes, to apply to parliament for assistance, and to be petitioners for acts for the better relief and employment of the poor within the districts respectively applying : among a number of these, we shall find, in the year 1764, acts for the better relief and employment of the poor, within the hundreds of Blything, Bosmere, and Claydon, Samford, Mutford, Lothingland, and Wangford, in the county of Suffolk ; the conveniences and inconveniences, arising from the carrying into execution the acts of parliament, in the several hundreds thus incorporated, at their own request, by parliament, shall be attended to in another place, by a digest of the best information that can be obtained from the incorporated parishes ; but, at present, a detail of what the legislature has done on the general subject shall be pursued.

In 1775, parliament repealed an act of Elizabeth, against erecting and maintaining cottages ; which had restrained the building them, unless four acres of land was laid to each cottage ; and had also restrained the owners from placing more families than one in any cottage, or receiving any inmates ; because it appeared, as
stated

stated by the preamble to the act repealing, that it laid the industrious poor under great difficulties, and tended very much to lessen population.

The 16th of Geo. III. cap. 40. in its preamble, states, that the great and increasing expence of maintaining and providing for the poor, and their continual distresses notwithstanding, make it highly expedient for the legislature to take this great subject into their serious consideration. And that information of the *state of the poor* and the nature of those expenses are necessary to be procured, to enable the two houses of parliament to judge of proper remedies to redress those grievances; and that such information cannot be effectually obtained, without the aid and authority of parliament.

Therefore it is enacted, that the overseers of the poor throughout that part of Great Britain, called England and Wales, shall make returns upon oath to certain questions specified in the act, relative to the state of the poor; and that the justices of peace, within their respective divisions, be authorized and requested to take such returns on oath, and to cause them to be transmitted to the clerk in parliament. Then follow the several clauses prescribing the means to effect this end, and also a schedule of the questions to which answers are to be returned.

There now seemed to be a serious intent in the legislature to investigate this important question; and a preamble better adapted to the purpose, and more expressive of the serious magnitude of the subject, the necessity of investigating it, and remedying the evils complained of, could not have been prefixed to the enacting clauses; and these clauses are in general well calculated to obtain the end required; but surely an omission appears in the schedule of questions annexed.

I. What was the amount of the assessments for the relief of the poor in the year ending at Easter, 1776?

II. How much of those assessments was applied for the relief or on account of the poor, and how much for the payment of county-

rates, or any other purposes? distinguishing, also, the amount of what was paid for the rent of work-houses, or paid or allowed for habitations for the poor; and if any poor reside in houses built at the expense of the parish, township, or place, state the total annual value of such houses.

III. What number of poor have received constant relief during that year, and what has been the expense thereof, as near as the same can be estimated?

IV. Is there a work-house in the parish? if so, what number of poor will it accommodate?

V. What was expended in litigations about settlements, removals, appeals, or other disputes, concerning the poor within that year, distinguishing how much of such expenses arose from disputes with parishes, townships, or places, not within the county, riding, division, precinct, soke, franchise, liberty, city, or county corporate, wherein such parish, township, or place, lay?

The return made from the poor-rates to parliament, stated to be from Easter, 1775, to Easter, 1776, in answer to the preceding questions, amounted, as appears in the Annual Register for 1777, to the following total result:

		<i>Money raised.</i>			<i>County-Rates.</i>		
		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
England	- - -	1,679,585	0	0	131,387	18	11
Wales	- - -	40,731	14	7	6,268	11	9
		<hr/>			<hr/>		
		1,720,316	14	7	137,656	10	8

		<i>Expended on the Poor.</i>			<i>Rents.</i>			<i>Litigation.</i>		
		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
England,	1,523,163	12	7	—	78,176	4	0	33,935	18	0
Wales	- 33,640	13	8	—	2,120	10	7	1,136	2	8
		<hr/>			<hr/>			<hr/>		
		1,556,804	6	3	80,296	14	7	35,072	0	8

The

The continual distresses of the poor are mentioned, in the *preamble* to the act, as one of the strong inducements to the inquiry; and, also, that information of the *state* of the poor is necessary to be procured. Does any one of these questions in the schedule reach this point? Does any of the questions ask, what are the prevailing distresses among the poor in your parish? Do they arise from their own extravagance, or from the price of labour? Are the necessaries of life risen in price? Has the earnings of the poor risen proportionably? What is the state of their morals? Are they greater drunkards, more lazy, than heretofore? Is the number of ale-houses increased within the last fifty years? Is the produce of excise in your parish more than formerly, and to what amount? These or some similar questions would have exposed the cause of the distresses of the poor, and their *real state*; which, if the overseers could not have answered, the residing clergyman's knowledge of the subject might have been called in aid, and the information, stated as necessary in the preamble, would have been obtained. But all this part of the investigation is forgotten in the act itself; and the inquiry goes solely to the quantum of the rate, and the mode of expenditure.

And what great leading regulation followed from this important inquiry? What was the happy result from this great body of information obtained by all the force and energy of the constitutional legislature? Alas!

Parturiunt montes!

But nothing was brought forth. This mass of information, thus constitutionally obtained, has served for nothing but waste-paper: and a necessary solemn inquiry, answered on oath, which cost the nation thousands of pounds, and the magistrates and overseers of the poor, throughout the kingdom, not a little trouble and attention, tended to no one good end whatever. Surely, when these great physicians of the state had felt the pulse of the patient, and weighed,

weighed, with due solemnity, every symptom of internal decay, they found themselves unequal to attempt the cure, and gave up the case as lost.

Two years after the return of the overseers had been received by the clerk in parliament, instead of any code of police, affecting this very important subject, we find a trivial, yet very proper, alteration in one of the sections of the 43d of Eliz. changing the period, to which parish-apprentices shall be bound by indenture, to the age of twenty-one years, instead of twenty-four. This is effected by 17 Geo. III. cap. 48.

Many applications, from particular parishes, districts, and hundreds, still continued to be made to parliament, for acts to relieve, regulate, and maintain, the poor, within their respective local situations; and many acts accordingly passed, much, it is to be hoped, to the general good of the places applying. Amongst others, passed in the 19th of this reign, are two, incorporating the hundreds of Hartsmere, Hoxne, and Thredling, the hundred of Coford, (except the parish of Hadleigh,) and also the parish of Polsted, in Suffolk. The fair conclusion to be drawn from these instances is, that, as the legislature felt the subject at large of too great a magnitude for their attention, those districts, most pressed by the urgency of necessity, found themselves obliged, at their own expense, to apply for leave to take care of themselves.

By stat. 20. Geo. III. cap. 46. it is directed, that *all persons* to whom any children shall be appointed to be bound, in pursuance of any act for the relief of the poor in any particular district in England, *shall* be obliged to provide for them; but that no person shall be compellable to take a poor child apprentice, except he be an inhabitant and occupier of lands, &c. in the parish to which such child shall belong; and that bastards born in houses of industry shall belong to the mother's parish.

In the 22d year of this reign a long act passed, entitled, "An Act for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor;" which, although

though not so expressed in the preamble, appears to be an aggregate of all the best regulations which had been brought before parliament by the multitude of acts which had of late years passed for incorporating parishes, particular districts, and hundreds, and maintaining and employing the poor therein.

The considerable length this act is extended to, comprehending in it all the necessary directions for the proceeding of parishes, where two-thirds of the owners and occupiers of land agree to unite, the mode of appointing the different necessary officers and their duties, the qualification of the voters at their meetings, the application of the poor's rate raised in the different parishes uniting, together with the multifarious directions respecting the internal police of an united house of industry, would render the most concise abridgement of this act too long for the attention of those who may run the eye over these cursory observations. Besides that it would be of no real service, as any parishes wishing to unite, on the power and principles of the act, must have recourse to the act itself, which appears to have thus much use in it, that it renders the expense of obtaining an act of parliament unnecessary, provided the parties agreeing to unite are satisfied with this code of regulations, and can make them coincide well with their own views and intentions.

It is not in my power to assert, positively, but it is believed, that very few parishes have taken the advantage this act has given, and have united for the purpose of relieving and employing their poor, by virtue of the powers, and subject to the regulations, of this statute.

What can have been the reason, that, since the legislature has opened the means to an union of parishes, without the expense of an act of parliament, for those *very purposes*, to obtain which many applications had been made to parliament, at an expense of some hundreds of pounds, in the outset of the scheme, so very few instances

stances should have appeared of parishes uniting by virtue of the powers in this act?

If we suppose experience to have proved, that general good has arisen in those parishes which have been incorporated by different acts of parliament, this is a question which will not soon be resolved; because, it is not easy to suggest a reason for those advantages to be refused, when offered *gratis*, which have, in a great many instances, been obtained at a considerable expense: and, in the *united* parishes in the county of Suffolk, the fact, that the poor-rates have greatly decreased, is generally allowed. Why, then, is not the greatest part of the kingdom incorporated into convenient districts, for the purpose of relieving and maintaining their poor by means of the powers and regulations of this act? Why have we *very* few, if *any*, instances of this act being enforced?

We cannot suppose that the clauses in the act militate, in general, with the regulations those parishes which wish to unite would choose to embrace, because they are a selection of the best general regulations from all the acts applied for by the parishes incorporated. But, does it not arise from the want of a centre of union, a man of consequence and ability, whose influence could render the fluctuating consents of a number of interested people steady, and fix them to the plan they have in agitation, but cannot absolutely resolve on? The attorney who was applied to when a bill in parliament was to be passed is this *kind of person*; he was interested in bringing the determination of the leading men in the different parishes to a point, and fixing them in their resolves. But now no one man takes any more interest in the matter than as an individual among equals; and most men understand, and feel themselves inclined to support, in all its purity, the maxim, — *inter pares, equalis est potestas*.

In the 26th year of this reign, cap. 56. another act passed to oblige the overseers of the poor to make a return, on oath, to certain questions relative to the state of the poor. The preamble
to

to this act is the same; and the act itself proceeded on much the same plan, and principle, as that which has been mentioned to have passed in the 16th of the king, except that a penalty of 50*l.* for making false returns, is added; and, also, a clause, subjecting persons taking false oaths to the pains and penalties of those convicted of wilful and corrupt perjury: the questions asked are also somewhat different.

And, in the same year, by cap. 58, an act passed, for procuring, on oath, returns of all charitable donations, for the benefit of poor persons, throughout that part of Great Britain called England and Wales. The returns are to be made in writing, on oath, by the minister and church-wardens of each parish. This act gives similar powers, and is armed with similar penalties, as the other.

L E T T E R XXI.

THE following questions were referred, by the act of parliament which passed in the 26th year of the present reign, to the overseers of the poor, to which they were obliged to make returns upon oath.

Question I. What money was raised, by assessments, for the relief of the poor, in the respective years, ending at Easter, 1783, 1784, and 1785?

II. What number of poor received constant, and what number occasional, relief, during each of the said years, as near as you can ascertain the same?

III. How much was paid out of the said money, in each of the said years, for expenses of overseers in journeys, and attendance on magistrates and others; and how much for entertain-

ments at meetings of the inhabitants on affairs relative to the poor?

IV. What payments were made out of the said money for law-businefs, and for orders, examinations, certificates, and other proceedings, respecting the poor, in each of the said three years?

V. How much of the money collected, under these assessments, was applied for the payment of county-rates, or any other, and what, purposes that did not concern the poor?

VI. How much of the money so raised has been expended in providing materials and utensils for setting the poor to work?

The returns made by the overseers to these questions, in pursuance of the act alluded to, were digested into form, and an abstract printed, containing every parish in England and Wales, reduced, alphabetically, under their respective counties and hundreds, giving an account, under fourteen distinct columns, of the name of the hundred within which the parish is situated; the money raised by assessment for the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, and the medium of those three years; expenses not applicable to the poor; the medium of net-money annually paid for the poor; net-money paid for the poor in 1776, taken from the returns then made to parliament; and heads of particular expenses: the general totals of which, for England and Wales, are as follow:

Money raised by Assessment.

			£.	s.	d.
For the year 1783.—	England	- -	2,068,585	7	1
	Wales	- -	63,901	5	1
			<hr/>		
			2,132,486	12	2
			<hr/>		

For

			£.	s.	d.
For the year 1784.—	England	- -	2,117,432	11	0
	Wales	- -	68,456	16	8
			<hr/>		
			2,185,889	7	8
			<hr/>		
For the year 1785.—	England	- -	2,115,775	2	5
	Wales	- -	69,129	16	6
			<hr/>		
			2,184,904	18	11
			<hr/>		
Medium of those years.—	England	- -	2,100,587	16	11
	Wales	- -	67,161	16	9
			<hr/>		
			2,167,749	13	8
			<hr/>		

Expenses not applicable to the Poor.

			£.	s.	d.
Medium of money applied for county-purposes, vagrants, militia, bridges, gaols, &c.					
	England	- -	113,714	15	6
	Wales	- -	5,565	11	4
			<hr/>		
			119,280	6	10
			<hr/>		
Medium of expenses not concerning the poor, re- pairing churches, roads, salaries to ministers, &c.					
	England	- -	43,223	5	7
	Wales	- -	1,007	15	4
			<hr/>		
			44,231	0	11
			<hr/>		

			£.	s.	d.
Medium of net-money annually paid for the poor.					
England	-	-	1,943,649	15	10
Wales	-	-	60,588	10	1
			<hr/>		
			2,004,238	5	11
Net-expenses in 1776	-	-	1,529,780	0	1
			<hr/>		
Increase	-	-	474,458	5	10
			<hr/>		

Net-expenses for the poor in 1776, taken from
the returns then made to parliament.

England	-	-	1,496,129	6	3
Wales	-	-	33,650	13	10
			<hr/>		
			1,529,780	0	1
			<hr/>		

Heads of particular Expenses.

			£.	s.	d.
Medium-expenses of overseers in journeys, attendances on magistrates, &c.—					
England	-	-	23,545	0	10
Wales	-	-	948	17	8
			<hr/>		
			24,493	18	6
			<hr/>		

Medium-expenses of entertainments at meetings relative to the poor.—

England	-	-	11,329	15	11
Wales	-	-	383	4	10
			<hr/>		
			11,713	0	9
			<hr/>		

Medium-

			£.	s.	d.
Medium-expenses of law, orders, examinations, and other proceedings, relative to the poor.					
England	-	-	53,757	11	0
Wales	-	-	2,033	11	6
			<hr/>		
			55,791	2	6
			<hr/>		
Medium of money expended in setting the poor to work.					
England	-	-	15,680	14	9
Wales	-	-	211	14	1
			<hr/>		
			15,892	8	10
			<hr/>		

The mass of information thus obtained from that part of the nation, subject to the operation of the poor-laws, digested, with great labour, by the committee of the House of Commons, which sat for the purpose, and printed at no inconsiderable expense, must surely have given rise to many useful reflections and observations in the minds of those gentlemen who were on the committee, although their country has not, as yet, reaped any benefit from their very important labours. They must surely have been struck with the alarming increase of the annual net-expenses of the poor since 1776, when they were 1,529,780*l.* to the medium of the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, which is stated to be 2,167,749*l.* a yearly increase of expense amounting to near 500,000*l.* If they, at first sight, might conceive this vast difference to have arisen from any extraordinary scarcity prevailing through the last three years, and examined into the fact, they would have found the average-price of wheat, through this period, to have been 2*l.* 3*s.* 7*d.* and that the average-price, for 1776, was 2*l.* 2*s.* 8*d.* being an excess only of 11*d.* per quarter, or not 2*l.* 10*s.* per cent. which will,
by

by no means, account for a rise in the expenses of the poor equal to above forty-one per cent.: to other causes, therefore, must they attribute this amazing increased expense, than those which arise from the dearness of provision; assuming it as a fact, that the price of bread-corn may be taken, with some degree of accuracy, as a sign of the price of most of the necessary viands which feed our numerous poor; and those, who know how the poor live, know, also, that bread, in fact, constitutes near two-thirds of the expense of a poor family for provisions: the increased expense of the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, does not, therefore, arise from the increment of necessary expenses in provisions.

Neither does it arise, in any great degree, from a deficiency of work, or decrease of the price of labour;—the price of labour remained much the same as in 1776; and, in this period, the American war had begun to drain the nation of its population and money, but no great effects had then been felt from it: in the last period, the nation was recovering from its losses; manufactures were again thriving, and the sensible part of our countrymen were looking up to agriculture, as a means of recruiting those sources which the waste of war had diminished.

Although, that an increase of expense, rather more than proportional, took place in the great manufacturing-towns, is plainly proved from this abstract, in which Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, certainly more than keep pace with other towns, where the poor are not employed by manufactures; yet to be certain how this fact will apply, and what principle may be collected from it, the returns from the same manufacturing-towns, of the expenses of the poor, should be seen, for the last two or three years, during which, our manufactures have flourished exceedingly: from many instances within the county of Suffolk, the poor-rates continue increasing, although the poor are, or might be, in full employ; for instance, Glemsford, rising gradually from 40*l.* 5*s.* 8*d.* in 1774, to 45*l.* 7*s.* 4*d.* in 1776, to 55*l.* the average of the three years, 1783,

1783, 1784, and 1785, to 1062*l.* 6*s.* 4*d.* in 1790, as appears by Mr. Butt's account, in vol. xvii. p. 497, of the Annals of Agriculture; and a similar rise, but in a less proportion, takes place at Melford, Clare, &c.; if this is the case in general, other causes than want of work must be sought for.

Another observation must also have struck these gentlemen, or, at least, those among them who act as magistrates in the counties where their respective qualifications, as members of parliament, lie; that the money expended in *setting the poor to work throughout the kingdom* is but little more than what is spent in *entertainments at meetings* relative to the management of their affairs; not *two-thirds*, of what comes under the article of *overseers journeys, and attendance on magistrates*; and about *one-fourth* of the sum which is the total under the column of *law-expenses*: they must also recollect, that the first section of the 43*d* of Elizabeth gives authority to the overseers to raise weekly, or otherwise, by taxation of every inhabitant, a convenient *stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron*, and other necessary ware and stuff to *set the poor to work*; and that this application of the money, raised by assessment, is the *primary object* in view of the legislature, in that act of parliament, under the authority of which, they perceive, by their printed abstract, above two millions to be annually raised on his Majesty's subjects, through that part of the kingdom subject to the operation of the act; they must also know that the application of competent sums of money, toward the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such other of them being poor and not able to work, and also for putting out children to be apprentices, was a secondary consideration of the legislature, and by no means comes into the foreground of the piece; and that law-expenses, expenses of overseers in attendance on magistrates, expenses of entertainments, &c. were not in view, or, at least, like all objects in the back-ground, where the perspective is well preserved, were but dimly and indistinctly seen; but that present practice has so reversed all regularity and
order

order in the present system of the poor-laws, as exhibited to the committee, that the great object of Elizabeth's legislature is now thrown into the back-ground, and the whole order of the picture reversed: the conclusion, that must be obvious to every one, is, that the 43d of Elizabeth, like Mr. Gamon's Act, respecting outside passengers in stage-coaches, although the law of the land, is not the practice of the land.

The total sum falling under the column of expenses of entertainments, 11,713*l.* certainly is not much for the number of parishes in England and Wales; but it leads to the expenses contained under the heads of law-business, attendances on magistrates, journeys, &c. These two columns form no inconsiderable total, 80,285*l.*; when a vestry, which ought to meet and conclude the business of their meeting in a part of the church appropriated for that purpose, adjourns to the neighbouring ale-house, the trifle which they expend of the poor's rates is not all; parish-business is the object; at a meeting of parishioners, having a common topic to converse about, some soon become interested in defending their opinions; more talk requires more liquor, and their determinations are made, not like those of their German ancestors, *deliberant dum fingere nesciunt: constituunt dum errare non possunt*; but they reverse the order, they deliberate, while they are sober, and determine when they are drunk; hence journeys to magistrates, orders of removal on doubtful settlements, appeals to sessions; thence to the King's Bench; hence attorney's bills, and enormous assessments. Was no order of vestry good, or no parish-officer to be indemnified in expending the parish-money in law-contests, unless by an order of vestry, signed before noon, in the parish-church, after regular notice given, and no adjournment allowed, much of the article of expense would disappear.

Another use may also be made of this abstract: there are some very able, although not accurate, observers of what respects the poor, who have imagined, that the great increase of our expenses,
relating

relating to them, has arisen from temporary want of work. It may be recollected, that this cannot happen where the employment is agriculture, because this occupation always requires nearly the same number of hands all years, and is independent of any desultory call for work; which may, as all manufactures do, the demand of which is uncertain, give full employment to the poor some years, and leave them to subsist on the poor's rates when the demand for the manufacture ceases; a comparison being made of the medium of net-expenses of the poor, from the returns made to parliament in 1776, and the medium of 1783, 1784, and 1785, taking the total of five or six of those parishes, which may be known, by the person making the comparison, to depend principally, or entirely, on agriculture; the increase on the last medium will be found to rise from thirty to above forty per cent. more than the expense was in 1776, a rise by no means to be accounted for on the principle of the advanced price of the necessaries of life during this interval; and the idea of want of work in these parishes, which are thus selected, as being employed in agriculture, must be thrown out of the case; the effect then must have arisen from some other cause; a cause, I fear, neither tending to the comfort of the poor, nor the credit of the overseer.

That column which contains the medium of expenses not concerning the poor, viz. repairing churches, roads, &c. salaries to ministers, &c. amounting to 44,231*l.* certainly ought not have made its appearance in this abstract, because no part of the money collected by assessments for the relief of the poor ought to have been applied to purposes specifically different from those to which the rate is appropriated by the 43d of Elizabeth, and which purposes have their different funds provided for them by other authorities: the church-wardens rate repairs the church; the surveyors rate repairs the roads; and the ecclesiastical estates are amply sufficient for providing and paying salaries to ministers: it is, therefore, some matter of surprise, why the poor's rate is clogged with

such a considerable sum, which is foreign to its proper application : in well-regulated parishes such charges on the poor's rate are not admitted ; and many blanks, consequently, appear against individual parishes under this column.

No abstract of the returns made to the second question appears, which inquires what number of poor received constant, and what number received occasional, relief ? A question of, at least, equal importance to any of the others, as the aggregate would have been nearly, if not fully, a return of all the poor throughout England and Wales ; or, at the least, it would have informed us of the number of those who have been at any time, within the three years, a burthen on the public. Why the committee did not inform themselves of this fact, it is no easy matter to guess ; — possibly, the returns were too incomplete to afford any certain information ; but, if that were the case, the question should have been repeated from year to year, until the returns had been accurate and full ; because this fact must be known before any radical cure can be attempted, as it leads to a certain knowledge of the extent of the disease.

The report from the committee, appointed to inspect and consider the returns made by the ministers and church-wardens, relative to charitable donations, for the benefit of poor persons, in pursuance of the 58th chapter of the same year, states, that it appears by a former report, made under the said act, the 23d day of May, 1787, that, out of near thirteen thousand parishes, from which returns of charitable donations have been required, there were only fourteen parishes that had made no such returns.

That the committee directed an abstract to be made of the returns ; but finding, on inspection of the abstract, that a great number of the parishes had made defective returns ; some by not naming the persons who gave the charities ; others by not naming the trustees ; others by not describing whether the donations were in land or money ; others by not describing the produce of the
money,

money, lands, or rent-charges, so given; the committee directed their chairman to write circular letters to the ministers and church-wardens of all the parishes, &c. where such omissions appeared, requiring them to send more perfect returns.

The committee then reports, that about 4065 letters had been sent, that answers had been received to about 3376 of them, many of which had given the explanation required; and many others had stated that they could give no farther information.

That the committee have caused the produce of the said charities, in land and money, as far as they can be collected from the said returns, to be cast up in each county; by which the annual amount of the produce of the money and land, through England and Wales, appears to be:

MONEY.				
England,	£ 46,173	9	9	
Wales,	2,070	0	8	
<hr/>				48,243 10 5
LAND.				
England,	£ 206,301	8	8	
Wales,	4,166	0	2	
<hr/>				210,467 8 10
<hr/>				

Making together a total of £ 258,710 19 3

And that the committee had reason to believe very considerable farther sums will appear to have been given for the like charitable purposes; whenever *proper means* can be found for investigating and completing those discoveries, by extending the inquiries to corporations, companies, and societies of men, as well as feoffees, trustees, and other persons.

The committee also observes, that, upon the face of the said return, many of the charitable donations appear to have been lost, and many others are in danger of being lost, and that the matter

seems to be of *such magnitude* as to call for the *serious* and *speedy* attention of parliament, to amend and explain the act, by specifying, with certainty and precision, the objects to which they may think fit to direct their inquiries, in order to procure full and satisfactory returns, and *the establishment of such measures as may be effectual for the relief of the poor persons who were the objects of the said donations*; and for carrying the charitable purposes of the donors into execution.

The committee appears to have been strongly impressed with the idea, that much information on the subject was intentionally withheld, and that a more minute investigation was necessary to acquire a sufficient insight into this important branch of the revenue belonging to the poor. When it is recollected, that the inquiry on this head was made with a view to the best of purposes, that of regulating the application of these estates, which had, from most distant times, been left by charitable donors to the use of the poor; and that the information is required from *those who are the proper guardians of these estates*; and the questions are accordingly applied to the ministers of parishes and the church-wardens; it is a matter of surprise that such faulty or deficient returns were made; but is it not matter of greater surprise, that the committee should stand in need of more full and satisfactory returns, in order to *establish such measures as may be effectual* for the relief of the objects of the said donation, while the statute of charitable uses, passed in the 43d of Elizabeth, is the law of the land? and which was passed with a view of snatching these estates from the hands of those harpies, who would *then*, as they will *now*, if they can, divert their produce from the poor into their own pockets. This statute passed in the same year as the leading statute which respects the poor, and forms part of a plan, at the time in contemplation; and a very prudent part it is, to make as productive as possible that revenue which the poor could claim as their *right*; at the same time as they took from the pockets of their richer fellow-citizens, what that revenue might, when

when applied according to the intention of the donors, fall short of supplying their absolute necessities.

This statute empowers the chancellor or keeper of the great seal, and the chancellor of the dutchy of Lancaster, for the time being, within the dutchy of Lancaster, to award commissions to the bishops of every diocese, and to other persons of good and sound behaviour, or any four or more of them, authorizing them to inquire, as well by the oaths of twelve men or more of the county, as by all other good and lawful means, of all and singular such estates, and gifts, &c. and of all abuses and breaches of trust respecting them; an useful and necessary commission, which, if issued in those instances where the committee suspects information to be held back, would be equal to every good effect, and preclude all necessity for more acts of parliament on this head, either to compel a discovery or to enforce an application of the rents and profits of those estates, to the purposes for which they were originally granted.

L E T T E R XXII.

THE History of the Poor-Laws, with observations, is the first publication of any consequence on this subject, which appeared in his present Majesty's reign; and the same author's name being in the title-page as in that well-known book, Burn's Justice, the reader has reason to expect much information on the subject, nor will he be disappointed. Burn lays the foundation of his inquiry in remote antiquity, informing us how the poor were maintained in this country as soon as we began to enjoy the first dawn of civilization, and proves that the ecclesiastic revenue was subject to the burthen as far as one-fourth of the produce at first, and one-third afterwards. To this purpose he quotes Kennet's Impropr.

14, 15, and says, that the poor also received some portion of their maintenance from the alms of the people and from the monasteries.

He then recites, rather fully, all the statutes relative to the poor, dividing them into three heads; servants, &c. vagrants, and impotent poor.

Observations on the statutes form the fifth chapter; and here I must express my disappointment, in not receiving any information from this able writer, at what time, and by what means, the poor in particular, and the nation at large, lost their hold on that portion of the ecclesiastic revenue, which he states them originally to have enjoyed. The author of Burn's Ecclesiastical Law was assuredly able to give full information on this important subject; and it was a necessary part of his plan, because he is obliged to lay the foundation of the compulsory maintenance, which they now partake of, *in the custom of begging*; a practice which, in his chapter on farther regulations, he very strongly deprecates, and is of opinion it should be utterly abolished: whereas, the custom of begging has its most natural foundation in the want of necessary relief; an exigency, urgent in proportion as they were deprived of their share of this eleemosynary revenue; which being withdrawn gradually by the ecclesiastics, the poor were encouraged from the pulpits to beg that maintenance of the people at large, which they had been accustomed to receive from the estates of the church in a certain proportion, and which being exhausted, they then might reasonably have been permitted to ask alms from the people, and not before. On this topic he is silent, and tells us, "That the minister *was to take* all opportunities to exhort the *people* to be bountiful: — houses were to be provided for them by the devotion of *good people*, and materials to set them on such work as they were able to perform: — then the minister, after the Gospel, every Sunday, was specially to exhort the *parishioners* to a liberal contribution: — next, the collectors for the poor, on a certain Sunday in every year, immediately after divine-service, were to take down, in writing,

writing, what every person was willing to give weekly for the ensuing year; and, if any should be obstinate and refuse to give, the minister *was gently to exhort him*; if he still refused, the minister was to certify such refusal to the bishop of the diocese, who was to send for and exhort him in like manner; if he still stood out, the bishop was to certify the same to the justices in sessions, and bind him over to appear there; and the justices, at the sessions, were again gently to move and persuade him; and, finally, if he would not be persuaded, then they were to assess him what they thought reasonable towards the relief of the poor: and this brought on the assessment in the fourteenth year of Queen Elizabeth." Such is Dr. Burn's deduction of the compulsory maintenance. Now, it is observable, that whatever of compulsion there might be in this duty of the minister, who, it is stated, *was to take all opportunities to exhort*, it did not receive its sanction from the law of the land, until the 27th year of Henry the Eighth; therefore, many centuries before that period, it was a voluntary act on the part of the ecclesiastics, who gradually withdrew that portion of their tithes, belonging to the poor, from their use, as they were able, by their influence, to persuade the parishioners to reinstate by their alms; and hence arose the necessity of our present poor-rates.

That the poor were, during the times of popery, maintained chiefly by the religious houses, is stated as a vulgar error: "Their hospitality was to the rich; they were great inns; they entertained those bountifully who could be bountiful to them again." With this observation the former part of our inquiries perfectly agrees.

Another fact this treatise states as remarkable, is, "That every proposal which hath been made for the reformation of the poor-law hath been tried in former ages, and found ineffectual."

The antiquity of settlements is deduced from the more antient statutes, and proved not to have originated from the statute passed in the reign of Charles the Second: the doctrine of removals is also traced from the same sources. But thus much is clear; that, from whatever

whatever source the idea of them originally sprung, they are themselves an abundant source of expensive litigations.

The origin and progress of the office of overseer is ingeniously traced from the church-wardens, who were the original overseers, and still by statute-law continue so; because the management of the poor, Dr. Burn says, was, at first, *solely an ecclesiastical matter*, "in aid of the church-wardens, collectors were appointed, and afterwards the overseer."

Begging is traced from the first statute in the 23d of Edward the Third, "when none under the colour of pity and alms were to give any thing to such as might labour, under pain of imprisonment;" to the last act of parliament in the 17th of George the Second, which makes it the first step towards vagrancy, "persons begging within their own parish, being deemed idle and disorderly persons, and to be sent to the house of correction."

Badging of the poor, which is directed by the 8th and 9th of William the Third, is supposed to have sprung from the military institution, when the nobility distinguished their followers with peculiar ensigns.

What observations there are in Burn's tract, respecting the vagrant-laws, relate chiefly to their extreme severity; it is a matter of self-gratulation to the writer of these pages, that, in a former part of them, he should have fallen into a train of similar sentiments on this head. Rating the wages of servants by statute has also fallen under our consideration; no additional information is to be found in his observations on these statutes, except the assertion, that, by the experience of four hundred years, it appears, that the regulating the prices of work leaves no room for industry and ingenuity; "for, if all persons, in the same kind of work, were to receive equal wages, there would be no emulation."

The clothing of the poor, in antient times, is discussed; and, from the argument, it appears, that the statutable clothing, in the reign of Edward the Third, for handicrafts and yeomen, was not to exceed

exceed 4*s.* 6*d.* a yard, or thereabout, estimating by the money of the present times; for which price a strong and warm clothing might still be purchased.

This tract then gives an account of the different schemes for reforming the poor-laws, and goes at some length into Lord Hales's, Sir Josiah Child's, Mr. Cary's, Mr. Hay's, Mr. Alcock's, Anonymous, Lord Hillsborough's, Sir Richard Lloyd's, Mr. Fielding's, and Mr. Cooper's, plan; all which have been already explained in the former pages of our strictures on this subject. We then come to the seventh chapter, in which the author proposes farther regulations:

"Thus," he saith, "hath the wisdom of the nation in parliament, and of individuals, been employed in providing properly for the poor; and yet they are not properly provided for." The fact is true; but it ought not to induce an opinion, that it is impossible to meliorate their situation and lighten our burthens.

Two particulars, he says, should be rectified, until time and experience suggest farther alteration: first, to prevent the nuisance of common begging:—the means he proposes are, give them nothing: "if none were to give, none would beg, and the whole mystery and craft would end in a fortnight:" and, in order to bring this about, he would have all who relieve a common beggar be subject to a penalty. Surely the principles of liberty, policy, and humanity, all equally militate against such a regulation; experience also has proved its insufficiency for the purpose: in times of ignorance the experiment was made, and found ineffectual. By the 23*d* of Edward the Third, none was permitted, under colour of alms, to give any thing to such which may labour, under the pain of imprisonment. This statute was repealed by Edward the Sixth.

The other fundamental defect is, according to this writer, in leaving the whole management to those annual officers, called overseers of the poor; and the practical duty of such an officer is ironically pointed out with some humour: "He is to keep an extraor-

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dinary look out, to prevent persons coming to inhabit without certificates, and to fly to the justices to remove them; and, if a man brings a certificate, then to caution all the inhabitants not to let him a farm of 10*l.* a year, and to take care to keep him out of all parish-offices; to warn them, if they will hire servants, to hire them half-yearly, or by the month, by the week, or by the day; rather than by any way which shall give them a settlement; or, if they do hire them by the year, then to pick a quarrel with them before the year's end, and so to get rid of them: to maintain the poor as cheap as possible they can at all events; not to lay out two-pence in prospect of any future good, but only to serve the present necessity; to bargain with some sturdy person to take them by the lump, who yet is not intended to *take* them, but to hang over them *in terrorem*; if they shall complain to the justices for want of maintenance, to send them into the country a begging; to bind out poor children apprentices, no matter to whom or to what trade, only take care that the master lives in another parish; to move heaven and earth if any dispute happens about a settlement, and in that particular to invert the general rule, and stick at no expense; to pull down cottages, to drive out as many inhabitants and admit as few as possibly they can;" with many other ironical directions, reminding the reader of Swift's Advice to Servants; by which it is apparent, that this our great luminary in the duty of magistrates knew well that the office of an overseer was sometimes neglected, sometimes perverted, and but seldom properly executed.

He, therefore, is of opinion, that the office should not be entirely abolished, but that a general superintendant over a certain number of parishes, as the justices in sessions shall find most convenient, should be appointed; and that the overseer should collect the rate, and it should be applied under the direction of the superintendant, whose business he more particularly points out.

To assist this purpose, he recommends monthly sessions to the justices, at which the church-wardens, overseers, and superintendant,

dant, should attend, give in their report, and receive farther orders: and those who think themselves aggrieved at these district-sessions should have a right of appeal to the quarter-sessions.

To insure attendance, he proposes that the justices should be allowed half-a-guinea a day out of the county-stock; and says, that these monthly sessions might also be useful to carry into execution the acts of parliament, respecting the highways, then in force, together with that variety of business, which is now the employment of justices at their common meetings or special sessions.

A curious instance is mentioned from a book of "the Police of France," written about 1753, which proves, that at the same time the French were anxious that their police, respecting the poor, should be put on the same footing as our English poor-laws, several proposals were published in London, recommending such a method of maintaining our poor as was then practised in France; viz. by general hospitals in provincial towns; exemplifying, in a very strong light, the truth of Horace's maxim,

Laudet diversa sequentes.

The French mode, he very properly observes, will annihilate all family-connections, and will create a *populus virorum* and a *populus mulierum*, which, at the same time that it lessens the number of the poor, will tend to depopulate a kingdom.

A county, instead of a parish, settlement, provided the poor could be maintained on a county-plan, he thinks might be adviseable; but that the idea of settlement should not be abolished, "only restrained, to the place of birth, or of inhabitancy for one or more years, and that such a restriction would tend to abolish certificates, by destroying the cause of requiring, granting, or denying, them." How this would be effected by restraining settlements to the place of birth or inhabitancy, for one or more years, I confess myself not able to see; that the number of law-suits, to ascertain the

settlement, might be diminished, is plain, but that certificates, to authorize the pauper to live elsewhere, would be as necessary as at present, is also equally obvious.

A reduction of all the poor-laws into one is recommended ; as is also a reduction of the highway-laws into one. The last alteration has been effected by the 13th of the present king, chap. 58, and has undoubtedly much simplified their use and operation, and rendered them, in most instances, a practicable and useful code : — equally good effects would arise from a simplification of the poor-laws. A code of acts of the legislature, militating in some instances with each other, whose several dependencies and connections are not easy to be discovered by a superficial observer or temporary officer, who must pick his duty out of the Statutes at Large, forms no bad apology for ignorance ; and ignorance, at the same time that it excuses neglect, becomes also a cloak to interested mistakes.

These are the chief notices which the author of the History of the Poor-Laws has made on the subject ; there are some other observations on the defects of the law, under the administration of justices of the peace, which do not immediately relate to the poor, and, therefore, may very properly be passed over, more especially, as it is apparent from the small sale of the book, although sanctioned by his well-known name, that it is by no means a subject which has excited much attention, or is generally studied, although it very intimately concerns all classes of people.

In 1764, a pamphlet, published by Becket, Observations on the Number of the Poor, and on the heavy Rates levied for their Benefit, starts an idea on the subject, that, whether true or not, proves some theoretic principles in the second part of Paine's Rights of Man to have no claim to originality.

But this writer so entirely loses the avowed purpose of his pamphlet in the title-page ; so neglects the interests of the *real* poor, in attending to the political consequences resulting from the number

ber of *genteel* poor, that it is futile to follow him in a subject which opens a field of argument vastly too extensive for this publication, foreign to its intention, and mischievous in its discussion.

L E T T E R XXIII.

IN 1767, the Farmer's Letters to the People of England appeared, which, among a variety of topics treated with much spirit and strength of argument, afford a few strictures on the poor, and the laws respecting them: the prevailing ideas shall be shortly mentioned, although the propriety and justice of them cannot be fully admitted.

The author considers the poor-laws of England as universally encouragers of idleness, drunkenness, and tea-drinking: he wishes for a total abolition of them, and for a new code, on the principle that those only should be maintained at the public expense who cannot maintain themselves, and that such maintenance should be in hundred-houses of industry.

Is it not the principle of the existing code that those only who cannot maintain themselves should be maintained at the public expense? And, if the parishes agree in thinking them advisable, may not hundred-houses of industry be now the means? Why then abolish the old laws to make new ones on the same principle? Would a man of sense pull down a family-mansion, in good repair, to build a new one on the same principle? Surely not.

A prevailing idea in this publication seems to be, that the poor should have no certainty of provision except from their own industry. But is not such the theoretic principle of the existing poor-laws, as far as is consistent with humanity? If practice has departed

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ed from the principle, blame the execution of the laws, and not the principle.

Dr. Price's Observations on Reverfionary Payments, Annuities, &c. were published in 1772. The principle of fome of thofe ufeful focieties called box-clubs originated from a plan intended for the benefit of the labouring-poor in this very excellent publication. The following is the calculation alluded to :

“ Let the fociety, at its firft institution, confift of a hundred perfons, all between the age of thirty and forty, whofe mean age may, therefore, be reckoned at thirty-fix ; and let it be fuppofed to be always kept up to this number by the admiffion of new members, between the ages of thirty and forty, as old ones die off : let the contribution of each member be 4*d.* a week, making, from the whole body, an annual contribution of 85*l.* 17*s.* : let it be fuppofed that feven of them will fall every year into diforders that fhall incapacitate them for feven weeks ; 30*l.* 12*s.* of the annual contribution will be juft fufficient to enable the fociety to grant to each of them 12*s.* a week during their illnefs, and the remaining 55*l.* per annum laid out, and carefully improved, at the rate of three and a half per cent. will increafe to a capital that fhall be fufficient, according to the chances of life in the tables three, four, five, to enable the fociety to pay to every member, after attaining to fixty-feven years of age, or upon his entering into his fixty-eighth year, an annuity, beginning with 5*l.* and increafing, at the rate of 1*l.* every year, for feven years, until, at the age of feventy-five, it will be a ftanding annuity of 12*l.* for the remainder of life. Were fuch a fociety to make its contribution 7*d.* a week, an allowance of 15*s.* might be made, on the fame fuppofition, to every member during ficknefs, befides the payment of an annuity, beginning with 5*l.* when a member entered his fixty-fourth year, and increafing for fifteen years, until, at feventy-nine, it became fixed for the remainder of his life at 20*l.*”

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If society has a right to expect from its constituent parts every exertion in their power to maintain themselves, before any individual has a claim for any part of their maintenance on society in the aggregate, an universal plan, obliging those members, who have nothing to subsist on but their labour, to lay up a small part of its produce, while in health, against the day of sickness and want, would be no unjust obligation, but would, on the contrary, be founded on a strictly equitable principle; and, if the foregoing calculation is right, it would be no inconsiderable assistance in sickness, and through the declining years of age: besides, the plan is easy of execution, and is at present, in many places through the kingdom, executed voluntarily by the poor, being encouraged by the subscription of men of substance; and very good effects arise from it, not only in relief of the poor subscribers themselves, and in relief of the poor's rates, but also in the preservation of good order among the lower classes of society, who, having men of principle for their charitable subscribers, trustees, and directors, are less likely to be incited to insurrections and disturbances than those who, having no communication with any classes of men superior to themselves, are easily led on to those riotous proceedings which are a scandal to good government.

Mr. Hanway, in his strictures on the causes of dissoluteness which prevail among the lower classes of people, laments that the number of country-gentlemen is so much reduced that they can no longer form a body of reserve to defend the cause of virtue, or furnish the means of its defence. He asks, what is the situation of a free people, when a gentleman of education, of five hundred or one thousand a year, who should be one of their chief guardians, brings himself and family into an expense which requires three times his income? He who might be a sovereign in his own demesne, and look down on what the world calls greatness, is now lost in the mass of splendid vanity, and bewildered in trifles.

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With reason might this worthy philanthropist make the foregoing remark. From this cause no inconsiderable degree of the dissoluteness which prevails in the country arises. Good examples are of great force, and such the country stands in need of. Were the examples which the clergy set in private life equally moral as their exhortations to their parishioners from the pulpit, even in that case the instances of moral conduct among that class of society, to which the labourer looks up with respect, would not be sufficient: they want stronger incitements, and a greater number of respectable examples; their immediate pay-masters and employers are not sufficiently raised above them, and too much mix with them in concerns of interest, to be respected as patrons; it is the hospitable country-gentleman, the respected magistrate, who understands, and is attentive to, their real interests, that are wanted, as constant house-keepers, in the country: but the presence of such at their country-residences cannot be commanded, and will not be voluntarily accorded, unless our huge overgrown metropolis, resembling the poet's greatness, void of wisdom, should meet with the same fate, and

Fall by its own weight.

In the same year as the two last publications which have been noticed made their appearance, there came also from the press an anonymous treatise, called, *A View of real Grievances, &c.* in which are a few just and pointed remarks, founded on truth and actual observation. "Many small country-villages can date the commencement of poor-rates from the introduction of public-houses, which corrupt the morals, impair the health, impoverish and reduce the poor to the greatest penury and distress." But the expenses of government are so enormous, that the excise is too considerable an object not to be encouraged at all events, and no tax that swells it will be taken off, to save the lower class of people from destruction. This writer is also of opinion, that the laws
relative

relative to parish-settlements are a very considerable cause of the increase of the poor-rates.

Mr. Kent, in his Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property, is of opinion, that the great increase in the poor-rates arises from the rise in the value of the produce of land, which, he says, is full sixty per cent. and that the rise in the price of labour is not above twenty. Another cause is, the disadvantage the poor labour under in carrying their penny to market: formerly they could buy their butter and cheese of the farmer; now they are driven to the shop-keeper: they could formerly have their wheat ground; they are now driven to the miller and baker. The remedy he proposes is, that gentlemen of fortune take on themselves the superintendence of country-business: let them act as guardians for the poor, reduce the size of farms, increase the price of labour, and the industrious poor will find a support by such encouragement: but he professes he knows no law which can force people to be industrious.

This assertion of Mr. Kent's, respecting the advanced price of the produce of the land, compared with the advance of wages, demands proof before it ought to be reasoned from as a principle; and at present it stands a mere *gratis dictum*, as advanced by him. Adam Smith goes more minutely into the question, which requires a decided judgement before consequences are deduced from it. The disadvantages the poor lie under in going with their penny to market are great; but it is much to be doubted whether, at any time, they could buy the produce of land immediately of the farmer, unless from their master: the quantity wanted by each individual is too small, to suppose that the farmer could allow that loss of time which would be necessary to deal to each one his trifling dole; and, if they lay in a stock, waste will make a greater consumption in their earnings than the advanced price of the shop-keeper.

The first edition of An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations appeared about this time; a book uni-

versally commended for the solidity of its principle, the clearness and accuracy of reasoning it contains, and the fair investigation of the subject which the learned author treats of. Some opinions which respect the poor, in this treatise, may, therefore, with propriety, be taken as so many aphorisms, and quoted as such, leaving the reader to trace the deductions this great writer has made in his own volumes, if he doubts the principles of his judgement. As the axioms, on the subject of the poor, which can be collected from these volumes, are scattered throughout the whole work, they shall be inserted, as they occur, in turning over the pages of Adam Smith's most luminous tract on the Wealth of Nations.

"A man must always live by his work, and his wages must be, at least, sufficient to maintain him; they must even, upon most occasions, be something more, otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen would not last beyond the first generation." B.i. c. 8.

"In Great Britain the wages of labour seem to be evidently more than what is precisely necessary to bring up a family." B.i. c. 8.

"Lord-Chief-Justice Hale, who wrote in the time of Charles the Second, computes the necessary expense of a labourer's family, consisting of six persons, (the father and mother, two children able to do something, and two not able,) at ten shillings a week, or twenty-six pounds a year." B.i. c. 8.

"In 1668, Mr. Gregory King, whose skill in political arithmetic is so much extolled by Dr. Davenant, computed the ordinary income of labourers and out-servants to be fifteen pounds a year to a family, which he supposed to consist, one with another, of three and a half persons: both suppose the weekly expense of such families to be about twenty-pence a head." B.i. c. 8.

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“ The real recompense of labour, the real quantity of the necessaries and conveniencies of life, which it can procure to the labourer, has, during the course of the present century, increased, perhaps, in a still greater proportion than its money-price.” The foregoing maxims, with respect to the wages of labour, are admirably elucidated in chapter the 8th, book the 1st, of this excellent work.

“ Since the time of Henry the Eighth, the wealth and revenue of the country have been continually advancing ; and, in the course of their progress, their pace seems rather to have been gradually accelerated than retarded. The wages of labour have been continually increasing during the same period ; and, in the greater part of the different branches of trade and manufactures, the profits of stock have been diminishing.” B. i. c. 9.

“ A little grocer will make forty or fifty per cent. upon a stock of a single hundred pounds, while a considerable merchant, in the same place, will scarce make eight or ten per cent. on a stock of ten thousand. The greater part of the apparent profit on a little stock is wages.” B. i. c. 10.*

“ The produce of labour, which arises from the leisure particular employments allow of, comes frequently cheaper to market than would otherwise be suitable to its nature.” B. i. c. 10.

“ The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable.” B. i. c. 10.

“ In Great Britain, the wages of country-labour approach nearer to those of manufacturing-labour, than they are said to have done in the last century, or in the beginning of the present.” B. i. c. 10.

“ The very unequal price of labour which we frequently find in England, in places at no great distance from one another, is pro-

* By this is meant, payment to the little grocer for loss of time in retailing his commodities in small quantities.

bably owing to the obstruction which the law of settlements gives to a poor man, who would carry his industry from one parish to another, without a certificate." B. i. c. 10.

" To remove a man who has committed no misdemeanor from the parish where he chooses to reside, is an evident violation of natural liberty and justice. The common people of England, however, so jealous of their liberty, but, like the common people of other countries, never rightly understand in what it consists, have now, for more than a century, suffered themselves to be exposed to this oppression, without a remedy. Though men of reflection also have sometimes complained of the law of settlements, as a public grievance, yet it has never been the object of any general popular clamour, such as that against general warrants; an abusive practice, undoubtedly, but such an one as was not likely to occasion any general oppression." B. i. c. 10.

" The obstruction, which corporation-laws give to the free circulation of labour, is common to every part of Europe. That, which is given to it by the poor-laws, is, so far as I know, peculiar to England; it consists in the difficulty in which a poor man finds in obtaining a settlement, or even in being allowed to exercise his industry in any parish but that to which he belongs." B. i. c. 10.

" The complaint of workmen, that rating of wages by act of parliament puts the ablest and most industrious upon the same footing with an ordinary workman, seems perfectly well-founded." B. i. c. 10.

" The money-price of coarse cloth in the fifteenth century, compared with the money-price at present, cloth is cheaper now than formerly, and probably much better." B. i. c. 11.

" The same comparison is made with respect to stockings, and to the same effect:—a pair of stockings for a poor servant did then cost as much as a bushel and a half of wheat." B. i. c. 11.

" Neither

“ Neither wind nor water mills of any kind were known in England so early as the beginning of the sixteenth century.”
B. i. c. ii.

This assertion cannot be intended to extend to corn-mills; and yet, by the wording of the sentence, it extends to wind and water mills of all kinds; it should, therefore, be qualified in a future edition: water-mills most certainly were in use before the conquest, although the first instance of the writ *seſta ad molendinum* appears, by Fitzherbert's *Natura Brevium*, to have issued in the 29th of Edward the Third.

“ All those improvements in the productive powers of labour, which tend directly to reduce the real price of manufactures, tend indirectly to raise the real rent of land.” B. i. c. ii.

“ The whole annual produce of the land and labour of a country, or, what comes to the same thing, the whole price of that annual produce, naturally divides itself into three parts, the rent of land, the wages of labour, and the profits of stock, and constitutes a revenue to three different orders of people; to those who live by rent, to those who live by wages, and to those who live by profit.”
B. i. c. ii.

“ The interest of those who live by wages is as strictly connected with the interest of the society as those who live by rent.”
B. i. c. ii.

“ The wages of the labourer are never so high as when the demand for labour is continually rising, or when the quantity employed is every year increasing considerably; when this real wealth of the society becomes stationary, his wages are soon reduced to what is barely enough to enable him to bring up a family, or to continue the race of labourers; when the society declines, they fall even below this.” B. i. conclusion of c. ii.

“ The proportion between the price of provisions in Scotland and England is the same now as before the great multiplication of banking-companies in Scotland; and corn is, upon most occasions,
full

full as cheap in England as in France, although there is a great deal of paper-money in England, and scarce any in France." B. ii. c. 2.

"It is not the number of ale-houses which occasions a general disposition to drunkenness among the common people; but that disposition, arising from other causes, necessarily gives employment to a number of ale-houses." B. ii. c. 5.

"The money-price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities; it regulates the money-price of labour, which must always be such as to enable the labourer to purchase a quantity of corn sufficient to maintain him and his family, either in the liberal, moderate, or scanty, manner, in which the advancing, stationary, or declining, circumstances of the society oblige his employers to maintain him." B. iv. c. 5.

"The real value of every other commodity is finally measured and determined by the proportion which its average money-price bears to the average money-price of corn." B. 4. c. 5.

"A tax on the necessaries of life operates exactly as a direct tax on the wages of labour." B. v. c. 2.

"But it is different with taxes on luxuries, even on those of the poor; although these might somewhat increase the distress of disorderly families, and thereby diminish somewhat of their ability to bring up children, they would not, probably, diminish much the population of the country." B. v. c. 2.

"Under necessaries, the author comprehends not only those things which nature, but those also which the established rules of decency, have made necessary to the poor; as linen, soap, leather shoes, in England: all other things he calls luxuries, without meaning to throw the smallest reproach on the temperate use of them, such as beer, ale, tobacco, tea, sugar, spirituous liquors." B. v. c. 2.

L E T T E R XXIV.

FROM the date of these last-mentioned publications, no other tract of any notice appeared, until Mr. Gilbert's exertions in the House of Commons again roused the public attention to this important object. The schedule of inquiries transmitted by the House to all the magistrates, the clergy, church-wardens, and overseers of the poor, throughout England and Wales, compelled a scrutiny into that subject; which, having been the concern of every one, had become the care of no one. The result of the inquiry alarmed the public, and their minds were agitated on two very important considerations: the first was, the extent of the evil; a fact established by the returns required by the legislature to the questions asked; it appearing, that a sum exceeding two millions was expended annually for the relief of the poor; and that this sum had increased by hasty strides, being an excess of nearly one-third of the total expended on the same account eight years before. The other point, on which the public attention rested, was the plan proposed by Mr. Gilbert to remedy this alarming evil. Several publications appeared on this topic, which, in general, condemned the means proposed, allowing, at the same time, every merit of good intention to the proposer. Those tracts which passed the press, for the purpose only of criticising Mr. Gilbert's plan, may be passed over in silence, unless they elucidate some principle on the subject of the laws or management of the poor. But, before these publications are noticed, it may be proper to give a summary abstract of the bill which Mr. Gilbert offered to the legislature of his country, to be passed into a law, and which he introduced to the attention of the public by a pertinent and sensible pamphlet, well calculated to explain the evils he wished

wished principally to regulate, and the means by which he intended to correct them.

The bill, by its preamble, stated the fact that gives rise to the regulations proposed: "That the rates and assessments for the employment and relief of the poor have, for many years, been greatly increasing; notwithstanding which, many sick and impotent persons are left to perish, or endure great necessities, for want of timely and effectual assistance; and others, who are healthy and able to work, are not properly employed, but are permitted to contract habits of idleness, and at length to become vagrants and thieves."

It then proceeds to state the remedy, intended to be passed into a law by the legislature, viz. the uniting and incorporating several parishes, for the purpose of maintaining and employing their poor, upon one common fund, under the direction and superintendence of gentlemen of character and fortune, residing in or near such parishes, and employing permanent and able officers and agents for the purpose.

This method the preamble states to have been found, by experience, better to answer the purpose than any other mode.*

The enacting-clauses contain the means proposed to carry this system into execution. The following are the heads of those clauses very briefly stated:

Justices at quarter-sessions to appoint a day for choosing commissioners, who are to take an oath prescribed, and choose a chairman, and appoint a clerk and two agents, and receive information on oath from high-constables, church-wardens, overseers, &c. and shall unite the parishes into distinct districts, not exceeding thirteen parishes in a district, nor less than three; but their powers

* The *experience* alluded to, most probably, was collected from the instances of the incorporated houses of industry in Suffolk, Norfolk, and elsewhere, throughout the kingdom.

shall not extend into any district whose poor are provided for under any special act of parliament.

These commissioners shall appoint not more than forty, nor less than twenty, committee-men in each district; shall limit their qualification by estate; and shall fix the salary to be paid to the district-agent; and the committee-men shall be chosen by such as are qualified in a manner required by the commissioners, who shall also make a report of what they have done, in this respect, to the justices of the peace of their respective counties; and shall deliver such reports to the clerk of the peace, which shall be printed, and a copy sent to every acting-justice of the peace, and to every high-constable; and the magistrates, at their quarter-sessions, shall pay, out of the county-money, the commissioners their reasonable expenses.

If two-thirds of the persons, qualified to be district-committee-men, are of opinion to adopt the provisions of the act for incorporating the district, that district shall then be declared incorporated, and shall proceed to ballot for a committee, and elect overseers.

The overseers are to return, on oath, the names of such as are qualified to be balloted for as committee-men. The mode of balloting is described, and subjected to certain regulations. The committee-men, when elected, are to take an oath to execute the trust reposed in them impartially.

When the major part of the districts have adopted the provisions of the act, it shall be declared established throughout the whole county or riding.

The district-committee-men are empowered to appoint a district-agent: they are to forfeit for non-attendance; and each district is to be a corporation.

All the clergy are qualified to be chosen committee-men for the district in which they do duty, for the time being, although not possessed of the qualification by estate.

New committee-men to be elected every year.

Parishes are to choose three overseers, in the manner prescribed by the bill, from whom the committee are to fix on one, who is to be allowed a salary ; and, from the time of the appointment of such new overseers, the duty of the old ones is to cease.

The duty of the new overseers is to inquire into the condition of the work-houses, and of the poor, within their respective parishes ; and to make a report thereof to the district-agent, and also of all alterations that may happen in any particular ; and to obey the orders and commands of the district-agent or the district-committee.

The district-agent is to lay such reports before the district-committee ; and to inform himself of all particulars with respect to the condition of the poor, as to their maintenance, employment, &c. which he shall also report to the district-committee at every meeting.

The property of all work-houses shall be vested in the district-committee, with all the furniture, stock, and instruments of trade, which have been bought and supported by the poor's rates and assessments :—which work-houses, &c. they may sell and dispose of, and the money arising from the sale to be applied in aid of the poor's rates.

And the district-committee are empowered to erect houses of industry where they cannot purchase or hire convenient buildings for that purpose ; and also to purchase or hire land, and to contract for waste or common grounds, with the consent of the lord of the manor.

The district-committee to become additional trustees of any sums of money, left in trust, to be laid out in the purchase of lands for any infants, lunatics, idiots, &c. in case the same shall exceed the sum of 20*l.* until such sums of money are laid out in the purchase of lands ; and the money, in the mean time, shall be laid out in the public funds, in the names of two or more persons,

sons, one to be named by the persons interested, and the other by the district-committee, or any ten of them; and the interest, in the mean time, to be applied to the use of the persons interested.

As soon as the house of industry shall be fitted up, and furnished, for the reception of the poor, in the manner directed by the act, no poor person is to receive any pay, pension, or relief, except in cases of violent sickness or sudden accidents.

Where, by the laws now in force, magistrates are empowered to proceed, on the complaint of the overseers of the poor, with respect to any bastard-child, they are then to proceed on the complaint of the district-committee.

The district-committee is empowered to apply what sums of money they may occasionally think proper towards paying the weekly contributions of such of the poor as are engaged in clubs and friendly societies, for establishing funds, by weekly contributions, to their relief and support when disabled by sickness or accidents, and also for the purpose of paying teachers, and providing books, for the instruction of children at Sunday-schools. The district-committee is also required to provide a school for the education of poor children.

Every district-agent shall, with the assistance of the clerk of the district, keep, in a book, an exact account of all expenses attending building, furnishing, and providing stores and utensils for the house of industry, and of the maintenance of the people residing therein, and of all other expenses respecting the poor, and shall lay a state of such expenses every month before the committee; and shall, in order to fix a proper measure of distribution from the parishes within the district, procure an account of the medium-expenses of the poor of every parish, within the years 1783, 1784, and 1785, for which returns have been made to parliament, and lay the same before the committee, who are to inspect and examine such returns, and make them as perfect as possible: and, to that

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purpose, they shall be empowered to summon before them such persons as have been parish-officers for those years, and all other persons who can give them information on the subject, who are to attend, and answer all questions relative to the subject, on oath, under pain of commitment for non-attendance, and of indictment for perjury if they speak falsely.

After the provisions of the act are adopted within any district, the sums to be annually raised for the relief and maintenance of the poor shall not, in any parish, exceed the annual sum so raised therein upon the medium of the said three years. The district-agent shall also, at the end of every quarter of a year, a week at least before the meeting of the next monthly committee, make an accurate account of the expenditure within the said quarter, and lay it before the said committee, that they may be enabled to make an order for the levying the poor's rates; and the district-agent shall also settle the quota of each parish, and lay the same before the committee for their allowance, which shall be notified to the overseers of the parish, who are to assess and collect the same, and pay it to the district-agent.

And, to raise money for buildings, &c. the committee may borrow a sum not exceeding four years poor-rates, and assign over the buildings, &c. and all or any part of the poor-rates, as security for the principal borrowed and interest.

No fees or perquisites shall be received for any business done, by virtue of this act, by any agent, overseer, clerk, or others. The appeal to the poor's rates to be to the quarter-sessions.

If any district-agent, or overseer, on requisition from the district-committee to come to account, shall refuse so to do, he shall be committed to the common gaol for a space not exceeding six calendar-months, or until he complies. All penalties inflicted by the act shall be recoverable before one justice of the peace.

These are the heads of all the material clauses in Mr. Gilbert's bill; there are some others which relate to the interior regulation
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of the houses of industry, and also two schedules of the rules, orders, by-laws, and regulations, which are referred to by the act; but the whole plan itself, a plan of that magnitude, as to involve in it consequences, immediately affecting the liberty and comforts of not less than six millions of our fellow-subjects, and a considerable part of the property of the remainder of our countrymen, was overturned, on a motion for the second reading of the bill, by a division of the House of Commons, of thirty-four members who were against the bill, to ten who were for it; only forty-four members being present.

Mr. Acland's plan, for rendering the poor independent on public contribution, stands next in order of time, having made its appearance in 1786.

The mode, after Mr. Gilbert's bill failed, he offers to secure that independence to the poor, which, he professes to hold out to them, is the establishment, throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws, of a general society, on the principle of the box-clubs; by which the members become entitled to a certain weekly salary, during sickness or incapacity to work, through accident or old age, on the payment of a certain sum of money weekly.

Another part of the plan he offers, is to secure to the poor their natural right of earning their bread where they are best able to do it, by abrogating the laws respecting settlements.

The only observation I shall at present venture on this subject is, that box-clubs have been in many places voluntarily instituted by the poor themselves; and experience has proved such institutions beneficial; and that what has in many places been done voluntarily might, without injustice, become obligatory to all; more especially if such obligation was counter-balanced by their recovering the liberty they have by nature, and which ought not to be taken from them by the laws of society, — of getting their bread where they best are able.

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An anonymous pamphlet, introducing a sketch of a bill for the relief and employment of the poor, appeared the same year Mr. Gilbert's introductory plan was published.

The writer reduces the complaints to two heads ; first, the great misapplication of the parish-money ; secondly, the general neglect of the parish-officers in employing the poor. He also affirms, 'that an increase of the impotent poor, beyond a certain proportion, is an impossibility, except in case of a pestilential disease : therefore he is of opinion, that the increase of the poor, which is so much talked of, is mere sound, and signifies nothing. He also says, that the only proper objects of charity among the poor are those who would work, but are not able.

The act he proposes is revisionary of the forty-third statute of Elizabeth ; the spirit of which is to be the main object of the act proposed ; and only such of the regulations in the other statutes are to be adopted as have a manifest tendency to the same principles ; but the act he proposes is, at the same time, undoubtedly *visionary*, for it is to *execute itself* ; that is, it must leave nothing to the discretion of those who are empowered to execute it.

Thoughts on the Cause of the Increase of the Poor, 1787. This pamphlet asserts, that the increasing burthen of the poor's rate arises from the absorption of smaller farms in greater, and by depriving the poor labourer of a portion of land round his cottage. Whether such an effect could arise from such causes, if they *universally* took place, shall not now be agitated, because it is apprehended the facts are by no means *general* ; but the increment of the poor's rate is *universal* ; and as considerable in those parishes where the smaller farms have *not* been absorbed by the greater, and where the cottager has *not* been deprived of his *garden*, as where these circumstances *have* taken place.

Mr. Godschall, in his general plan of parochial and provincial police, complains, and with much reason, of the negligent execution of the poor-laws, and with great truth and propriety inveighs
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against the swarm of ale-houses that infest all our towns, and deprave and impoverish the labouring poor. This pamphlet was published in 1787.

The Rev. Joseph Townsend, of Pewsey, in Wiltshire, tells us that the poor-laws, so beautiful in theory, promote the evils they mean to remedy, and aggravate the distress they were meant to relieve.

“ They are not only unjust, oppressive, and impolitic, but proceed on principles which border on absurdity ; because they say, that in England no man, even by his indolence, improvidence, prodigality, and vice, shall suffer want.”

He says also, that the distress of the poor does not arise from the high price of corn, soap, leather, candles, salt, &c, as will appear from the high price of labour, which has advanced in the proportion of six to four within a century ; and, for this assertion, refers to Sir William Petty.

That, under the present system, the master must either connive at the neglects of his servants, or maintain them without work ; that the laws discourage improvements in agriculture ; waste-lands would otherwise be tilled, as they are exempted from the claims of the church seven years, but not from the demands of the poor ; that a fixed and certain provision for the poor weakens the spring of industry.

The law of settlements has restrained the poor to their own parishes, where they are regarded with an evil eye, and has prevented them going elsewhere, where they would be received with joy ; parish-workhouses disarm the magistrate, and intimidate the poor ; badging the poor is also strongly reprobated ; county-workhouses are liable to still stronger objections ; and farming the poor is the top of the climax of oppression and absurdity.

Such is Mr. Townsend's Philippic on the present system of the poor-laws, contained in a publication which made its appearance in 1787, in which are many very sensible observations on the subject ;

ject; although it is conceived, that very few of those, who are in the practice of experiencing the execution of the system, will join in such an unqualified invective.

The reform proposed is, to abolish the whole system of compulsive charity; to promote voluntary contributions, as in the early days of Christianity; to encourage industry, economy, and subordination; and to regulate population, by the demand for labour; to establish work-shops in every parish, to train children to useful labour; to cause friendly societies to be established and regulated by the legislature; and, as long as it shall be expedient, to retain a given proportion of the poor's rates, the disposal of which should be wholly at the discretion of the minister, church-wardens, and overseers, subject only to the orders of a vestry; to lay a tax on horses, to drive farmers to use oxen, which will increase the quantity of food for the poor; to inclose commons, and relieve the poor by voluntary contributions.

The Rev. T. Haweis, rector of Aldwinkle, All-Saints, in 1788, offered a plan to the public, under the title of "Hints respecting the Poor, submitted to the Consideration of the Humane and Intelligent." He recommends box-clubs, to which the poor shall all be *obliged* to contribute, not less than one thirty-sixth, nor more than one twenty-fourth, of their earnings; all menial servants and young unmarried people, to pay one eighteenth of their wages and earnings; and every occupier of lands and tenements, to pay one twentieth of his rent; the minister, church-wardens, and overseers, to be a body-corporate for the management of the fund, and to have associated with them a person chosen by the poor, who contribute to the fund; the payments to be made by weekly contributions, and masters to be responsible for the quota of their servants and labourers; and each parish to be distinct from any other, and no association of counties, hundreds, or districts. From this fund the poor are to be relieved, with a sum not above four shillings a week, at the discretion of the body-corporate, without interference of a
magistrate;

magistrate; but, in particular cases, where the established rate of relief is not sufficient, the minister, during divine-service, is to mention the particular case to the congregation, and the church-wardens to collect for that particular case a free benevolence.

Begging to be restrained by a penalty on the *giver* to those who beg, and settlements to be abolished; but whoever migrates must give to the parish-officers an account of what parish he removed from, and where he paid his last contribution; and, if the officers of the parish do not choose to admit him as a parishioner, they must give to the officers of the parish, where he last contributed to the parish-fund, a memorandum or note, promising to pay them the portion of his earnings; and, in such case, he shall continue a parishioner of the parish whence he migrated.

All bastard-children to be deemed parishioners where their mothers are settled; but the fathers liable, as at present, to maintain them.

Such are the general heads of this plan, the minute organizations of which are not necessary to be noticed in the cursory view which is meant to be taken of these publications; the author also compares the sum of the proportion of contributions, proposed to be raised by his plan, with the amount now levied by the poor's rate in his parish, to shew the advantage and facility of the scheme proposed; and adds some well-founded remarks and sensible reasons in support of his proposals.

L E T T E R XXV.

SOON after the second reading of Mr. Gilbert's bill was put off, *sine die*, in the House of Commons, William Young, Esq. now Sir William Young, Bart. member of parliament for St. Mawe's,

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brought in a bill, which he had previously introduced to the notice of the public, by a pamphlet, entitled "Observations Preliminary to a proposed Amendment of the Poor-Laws;" which publication was corrected and enlarged in a second edition, whence a short summary of the principal heads of the act he proposed shall be taken.

The preamble states, that many poor persons become chargeable for want of employment where they are settled; who, if permitted to inhabit elsewhere, would not be chargeable.

Therefore be it enacted, that no person be removed to his place of settlement, until he be actually chargeable.

Provided that such person attends the summons of two magistrates, and makes oath of his last legal settlement; otherwise he shall be removed to his settlement, it being ascertained by other means; and attested copies of such examination shall be given to the parish-officers of the parish into which such pauper is come to reside, and to the pauper himself, which shall be admitted as evidence of his last legal settlement in all courts, &c.

Residence ten years in any parish, without being chargeable either to the parish in which they reside or to that where their legal settlement was, shall obtain a settlement in such parish for a pauper and his children.

No person, from the date of the act, to gain a settlement by paying taxes, by service, nor by apprenticeship, unless with consent of the parish-officers, signified in writing; but this act to have no retrospective view.

Bastards are to be settled with their mother.

Overseers removing a pauper are to be reimbursed by the parish to which he belongs: reasonable charges of maintenance and removal to be settled by one magistrate.

All contracts for maintaining the poor, allowed by the 9th of George II. to be void, and so much of that act to be repealed; but contracts for the maintenance of poor children above the age
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of seven to the age of seventeen, with the consent of the vestry and the parents of the children, shall be valid.

No publican shall be a parish-officer.

The overseers, &c. shall give a true account to two justices every six months, at stated times, of all ware, implements, tools, &c. for setting the poor to work; and also of all materials and stuff manufactured; and such justices are empowered to order the overseers to purchase other ware, implements, and tools, out of the money collected by the poor's rates; which order they must obey under a penalty not exceeding ten pounds.

The overseers are to register in a book, the names, sex, age, if married or not, — and children, their names, sex, and age, — of all poor persons receiving relief; and shall produce this book twice a year, at stated times, to two justices, at their petty-sessions, under the same penalty.

Two justices, at such special sessions, are to be empowered to order the overseers to bind out any poor children they think proper; but no person, unless living in the place of his legal settlement, is compelled to take such apprentice.

A vestry shall be empowered to fix a rate of wages, from the 30th of November to the 28th of February, which a majority of them shall agree on, to be paid to such poor people as cannot find work, and to send them round in rotation to the parishioners, proportionally as they pay to the rates; to be employed and paid, in the proportion of two-thirds by the person employing, and one-third by the parish-officers, out of the rates; which proportion, if any parishioner refuse to pay, a justice of the peace shall levy treble the amount.

A superintending-overseer, with a salary, may be appointed for a parish, hundred, or division, by two justices, at their petty-sessions; the salary to be paid by the overseers of the respective parishes out of the money collected by the rates; the duty of such overseers is described at large in the bill; and power is also given to the ma-

gistrates to remove him for misbehaviour, and he shall also be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten pounds for every offence; and no person is to obstruct him in his office under a similar penalty.

The penalties levied, by virtue of this bill, to be paid one half to the informant, and one half to the overseers of the parish where the offence shall be committed.

An appeal to the sessions given to persons aggrieved.

Sir William Young's preliminary observations to this bill contain much instructive matter, and prove, that the mover of the bill well understood the subject he brought forward to the consideration of the House; the attention his pamphlet, at the time of its publication, attracted, was such a test of its merits, as to occasion a wish that the limits of this tract would permit a recital of the greatest part of its contents; but, as the sincerity of unqualified praise is always suspicious, it will therefore better become the writer of these pages to mention an instance or two in which it is presumed Sir William Young has drawn a conclusion that the premises stated by him will not warrant.

He says, in page 23, that an avidity to increase income has introduced the inclosure of commons and wastes, which has tended to increase the poor's rates; and instances six parishes in Buckinghamshire, which were not inclosed in 1776, when the aggregate of the poor's rates in those parishes was 756*l.* 16*s.* 1*d.* but were inclosed in 1786, when the aggregate amounted to 1485*l.* 3*s.*; therefore he concludes, that inclosing wastes increases the poor-rates.

By the abstract of the returns made by the overseers, presented by order of the committee, the expenses of a great number of parishes have increased in a similar ratio between the two periods of 1776 and 1785, where there has been no inclosure of waste, equally as in these six parishes where inclosures have been made; therefore one fact opposes and destroys the other, consequently no such conclusion can be drawn.

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The consolidation of farms, which this enlightened senator states to have arisen from the necessity that part of the landed interest, who spend their time in our luxurious metropolis, feel to increase their incomes, is alleged as another cause of our increased expenses with respect to the poor; but the instance brought to elucidate the assertion is not in point; nor is it the practice, when one farm is increased to five hundred pounds a year by the consolidation of ten small ones of fifty, to pull down nine farm-houses; but, on the contrary, to put labourers into them; and the stock of the ten farms, which, when in the hands of ten little farmers, probably did not amount to two thousand pounds, increases in the hands of a capital farmer, of five hundred a year, to at least double the amount; and, where there is the greatest stock, there will be, *cæteris paribus*, the greatest employment: but this argument has been so ably handled by other pens, as to require no assistance I can give it; thus much, however, is certain, that where a consolidation of small farms proceeds to that excess, as to preclude the labourer's expectation of raising himself in the world, — honest ambition, the best spur to industry, is nipped in the bud.

The public had already received, from the pen of the Rev. Mr. Howlett, vicar of Great Dunmow, Essex, several tracts on the regulation of the internal police of the kingdom; more particularly on the subject which has just been mentioned, as glanced at by Sir William Young, viz. the effects arising from inclosures; which this very accurate investigator, and minute inquirer into facts, states to have been, improved agriculture, plenty and cheapness of provision, population, private and national wealth. In 1788, he turned his attention to the causes of the increase of the poor, and produced a pamphlet, entitled, “ The Insufficiency of the Causes to which the Increase of the Poor, and of the Poor's Rates, have been commonly ascribed: the true one stated, with an Inquiry into the Mortality of Country-Houses of Industry, and a slight View of Mr. Acland's Plan, for rendering the Poor independent.”

Four principal causes, Mr. Howlett says, have been assigned for the increase of the poor, and of the expenses for maintaining them: 1st, Our injudicious system of poor's laws, and their defective execution; 2d, the great number of ale-houses; 3d, the growing wickedness and profligacy of the poor; 4th, the ingrossing of farms. — The first cause has been assigned by Mr. Townsend and Mr. Gilbert, whose arguments and conclusions Mr. Howlett attacks, and then draws an inference; that, "upon the whole, though our poor-laws may be imperfect, and their execution defective; we have yet been presented with no satisfactory proof that any of these deficiencies are so great as to have caused that rapid increase of our poor and of our poor-rates, which have taken place;" and he is of opinion, before we ascribe these evils to the spirit of our laws, or their execution, we should inquire how the matter stands in other kingdoms of Europe, where no such laws exist; — he gives an instance of a parish in Edinburgh; another in Glasgow; where the expenses for the maintenance of the poor have increased very considerably; and concludes this head of his inquiry with extracts from some letters of Mons. Pataud, vicar of the parish of Paterne, in the city of Orleans, which state the population of that city at fifty thousand persons, of whom one-third receive charitable assistance; and that there is collected, by various means, and expended for their maintenance, about fifteen thousand pounds a year, and many, nevertheless, perish for want. From information contained in these letters, Mr. Howlett also concludes that five millions sterling are raised for the poor throughout the kingdom of France; and then asks if England cannot raise two millions better than France can five?

In the second section, he expresses his doubts of Mr. Godschall's opinion of the fact, that ale-houses are much increased in number throughout the kingdom; and conceives, on the contrary, that the number is considerably decreased; at least they are so in the hundred of Hinckford, in the county of Essex; therefore he concludes,

as far as ale-houses are concerned, if the reasoning alluded to be just, our poor's rates ought to have been gradually diminished.

In the third section, the wickedness and profligacy of the poor are considered : the increment of which the author does not, upon the whole, consider as equal to the increment of their expenses or actual distress ; although he acknowledges that there are some considerations which incline him to think, that there is really a greater degree of moral depravity and a greater frequency of vice among our poor than there were formerly ; but this increase he, with great humanity, argues to have been the *consequence* of their poverty, not the *cause* of it. In the pursuit of this investigation he takes notice of, and treats with no great respect, the opinions of Mr. Firmin, Mr. Locke, Lord-Chief-Justice Hale, Sir Josiah Child, Mr. Defoe, Mr. Godschall, and others, who, respectively, at different times, from 1678 to the present period, have declared themselves of opinion, that the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners have occasioned a general aversion to honest employment.

The question, whether the absorption of smaller farms in larger has tended to increase the number of poor and their expenses ? occupies the fourth section. Mr. Howlett enters fully into the subject ; and proves, by fair deduction of argument, that, allowing the number of labouring-families to be increased, by the small farmers being reduced to labourers, to the amount of even forty or fifty thousand, yet, as the call for labour in husbandry has, by the same means, been increased, and the number of poor added to the total being not a hundredth part, it will, at the most, allow for an increment of expense amounting to ten thousand pounds a year. To prove this, these facts are stated : — 1st, that the number of labourers, forty years ago, was five millions ; 2d, that the poor cost the kingdom, at that time, a million sterling ; and that the practice of engrossing farms may have converted farmers' families into labourers to the amount of forty

or

or fifty thousand. Mr. Howlett gives every commendation to the ingenious manner in which the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture has treated this subject, in vol. vii. p. 516. — Having, in the first part, offered his objection to the causes assigned by many eminent men, who have given their opinion on this subject, as being inadequate to the effect attributed to them; he proceeds; in the second section, to state what appears to him *alone* sufficient to have raised the expenses of the poor much higher than they have risen, to place them in a situation equally comfortable with what they possessed forty or fifty years ago, “*This is none other than, that the price of labour has not advanced in proportion to the advance in the price of provisions.*”

To detail the train of arguments followed by our well-informed and ingenious investigator, would extend this part of the present inquiry to too great a length; and, to mutilate arguments, where one doubts of their solidity, would not be candid: let it suffice, therefore, to drop the subject at present, stating only the result of the author's opinion, in his own words: — “Upon the whole, there is a long and uniform chain of evidence to establish *our main point*, that the increasing miseries and expenses of the poor have been owing to the greater advance in the price of provisions, either gradual, or sudden and temporary, than in the price of labour.”

In the next section, Mr. Howlett conceives it necessary to obviate a very natural conclusion from the doctrine he has attempted to establish, *viz.* that, if the price of labour has not increased in an equal proportion with the price of provisions, it is an evidence of the declining prosperity of the kingdom, and a certain indication of ruin: this he by no means admits to be the case, and accounts for the exception to the rule by collateral circumstances, as the increase of people and the simplification of labour by the use of machines, and concludes with this observation: — either raise the

the wages of the poor, or give them provisions as they had them forty years ago.

The remaining part of this publication, which relates principally to an examination of the plans that have been offered, particularly Mr. Gilbert's, and the invalidation of those reasons which that gentleman has advanced for conceiving a good opinion of houses of industry, as to the object of a diminution of the expense, by pointing out the precariousness of such a diminution continuing, and by meeting the good effect which they have occasioned in lessening expense, with instances of increased mortality, especially among children, cannot be now dwelt on; as it is the purport of this tract to weigh the general sentiments of the kingdom, on the leading points of the police respecting the poor, in a balance compounded of the sense of the legislature, as collected at different periods, and the opinions of individuals, who have given us their sentiments in print, on this important topic, rather than to cavil at any of those opinions that militate with the writer's ideas; which, until the subject is fully investigated, have not the sanction of solid judgement, nor the light of clear information.

That many more tracts than those which have passed, as it were, in review on this subject may have been written, and that more rays of light might have been collected on a topic which is so much the concern of every man, and appears to be the immediate care of no man, cannot be denied. Many pamphlets have survived by name only, but not a single copy of them can be found: possibly, had they contained any matter worthy of notice, they would, by some means or other, have been preserved to us, either in the volumes of the reviewers, or by subsequent editions: but it appears absurd to regret the want of that information which the age, cotemporary with the writer, did not think worth handing to posterity; and the only apology to be made is for that inattention, if such be the fault, which has ne-

glected to take notice of what would afford solid information ; which, it is hoped, will not be found to be very considerable, more especially when the plan of these letters is considered, which is calculated to bring to the mind what the legislature has done, and sensible men have written, on the subject, from the time that the police of the poor first claimed the attention of the community.

Some stress has been laid on the increasing population of the kingdom as a cause of the increasing expense in maintaining those who class under the title of labouring poor: the progression of that increase in our number shall now be shortly stated, as it will be at least satisfactory to know the degree : we may afterwards reason on the effect.

Lord-Chief-Justice Hale and Mr. Gregory King agree in asserting, that the population of England, on the arrival of the Normans, in the year 1077, might be about 2,000,000.

From a computation which appears accurate, or as nearly so as the nature of the case requires, or can be expected to be, the population of England and Wales was, in the year 1327, about 2,092,978.

In 1583, the number of people amounted to about 4,688,000.

In 1662, Mr. Graunt calculated the population at 6,440,000.

In 1690, Mr. Gregory King calculated them at 5,500,000 ; but he estimated four and a half to a house, whereas it is supposed that the number of inhabitants were, to the number of houses, as about five two-fifths to one, which would increase the number to about seven millions. — Mr. Chalmers's estimate.

Mr. Howlett calculated them, a few years ago, at 8,691,597 : — the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture, 8,500,000 : — Dr. Price, about the same time, at only 5,000,000 : but the concurrent opinions of political arithmeticians agree, that the higher numbers are nearest the truth ; and that Mr. Howlett's proportion of five and two-fifths to a house is as exact a *ratio* of inhabitants to dwellings

lings as can easily be pointed out. In the parish of Clare it was, in 1786, very near the truth, the dwellings being 201, — the inhabitants 1077.

The following deviation from the proposed line of this inquiry shall close this paper :

Mr. Howlett having appeared, in the last number of the *Annals*, to doubt the validity of an observation, which has fallen from me, with respect to the call for labour being of a more constant nature, and less desultory, in agriculture than in manufactures; the observation shall be repeated in the expression made use of on the occasion: and, to prevent the effect which might arise in the minds of those who pay any attention to the subject, from the respect due to the opinion of the gentleman who doubts the propriety of the idea alluded to, the assertion shall be re-examined by the test proposed by himself. — The passage alluded to is as follows:

“ Some have imagined that the great increase of our expenses, relating to the poor, has arisen from temporary want of work: it may be recollected, that this cannot happen where the employment is agriculture, because this occupation always requires nearly the same number of hands all years, and is independent of any desultory call for work, which may, as all manufactures do, the demand of which is uncertain, give full employment to the poor some years, and leave them to subsist on the poor's rates when the demand for the manufacture ceases.”

Mr. Howlett says, and it must be allowed as a fact, that, near the commencement of a lease, a greater quantity of work is done in a farm than towards the conclusion: but this corroborates the assertion alluded to, which respects the kingdom at large; for innumerable leases are constantly commencing and expiring: the whole quantity of work done in agriculture, one year with another, must therefore be nearly the same; and, though individual parishes may find some difference, the aggregate of work throughout the king-

dom must be at all times equal; and this is not only *possible* or *probable*, but *inevitable*; but the universality of the cause, both in respect to time and place, producing an effect directly opposite to that which would arise from a cause affecting time and place partially only. If, throughout England, all leases were to commence at the same time, and expire at the same time, the effect Mr. Howlett contends for would happen, and the difference in the demand for labour might at times be great; but the fact is different, so is the effect.

Mr. Howlett says, seasons occasion a difference in the demand for labour. — So they do. But the *quantum* of earnings remains the same at the end of a year: for instance, in a wet summer, during the actual falling of the rain, the application of industry to the works of the field is suspended; but the call for labour is proportionably greater when the earth is fitted to receive again the labour of the husbandman; and probably the demand increases in a greater *ratio* than the time lost: we know how difficult it is to keep land clean in a wet season; we know that a greater burthen of straw is grown, which occasions a greater demand of labour to harvest, and also to thresh; a greater demand for work brings a greater price; hence the advance of price in the harvest and the barn repays the loss of time, and the quantity of labour done throughout the year remains the same.

The idea of “the earth being fast bound in chains of frost for three or four months in the year, which defy the mattock, the spade, and the plough,” cannot be allowed, in all its latitude of assertion, to take place in England: few farmers discharge their labourers for a frost; and in that time of the year, when we have reason to expect such chains of frost, the plough suffers no imprisonment, for it would not otherwise be at work; the mattock and the team can still find work; a *snow only* can prevent *them* being employed, and that but for a few days; the spring of industry will, when affected by such a mere temporary cessation, immediately afterwards

afterwards re-act with greater force, being excited by a brisker demand.

Difference of produce, except in the case of hops, which are too confined and local a culture to reason from generally, can very little affect the quantity of labour throughout the year; a wet season generally produces worse crops throughout the kingdom at large than a dry one, although not in quite so great a disproportion as Mr. Howlett asserts; but a wet season produces a greater demand for labour to keep the land clean, and also in hay-time, in harvest, in threshing, although the produce of corn is less; therefore, speaking generally throughout the kingdom, the less productive the crop, the more the labour.

In short, Sir, had not the cavil fallen from so able a critic and so respectable a man, I should not have thought my observation required a defence; it is to vindicate the general rectitude of the sentiments which have escaped from me on this subject in his and your readers' minds, that I have revised what I had advanced, and remain of opinion, that reason is on the side of my observation, and believe that experience will not contradict it.

L E T T E R XXVI.

FROM the information contained in the preceding pages of these letters, and from the evidence which they have opened to our knowledge of what has been done by our legislators, and written by the enlightened part of our countrymen on this subject; although that information cannot claim the merit of minute detail, nor the evidence that specification of particulars which would have disgusted the many, although it might have been approved of by a few; it is conceived several useful principles may be deduced, that
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may serve as a ground for maxims, which, if called into action, by the energetic power of the legislature, may probably produce an improvement in the moral habits of the poor, lead them on to the enjoyment of a greater share of the comforts of life, and diminish, at the same time, the expenses of their maintenance.

That those, who are in such a state, with respect to the riches of this world, as to have no other property than that which their labour can produce them, claim as a right, in all civilized nations, however the laws which respect property may be modified, protection from personal injury, is a position which cannot be doubted; no social compact can otherwise be supposed to exist between man and man.

This claim leads on to another, flowing from it as a natural and inevitable consequence; a claim to maintenance; when, by the loss of health, accidental debility, or age, their power to maintain themselves ceases; because, in this case, they would otherwise sustain a personal injury, from the modification of property by the laws of society; and in a similar proportion is their claim, as through any of these causes that power is diminished.

These are principles implanted on our minds; they are anterior to and vastly above all human laws; they form an impulsive duty as strong in its operations, and as lovely in its effects, as the *στοργή* in the animal creation: it is upon this basis, as upon an immoveable rock, that Christ builds his strongest moral exhortations, and calls this duty *charity*; tells us that it will cover a multitude of defects, that it binds us by a stronger obligation than any other moral or religious duty.

In all climes, through all ages, wherever civilization has spread a single ray of light, has this principle been inculcated; and that not as an optional service, to be done or neglected, at the will of the free agent, but as a bounden duty; one, the omission of which, is an affirmative offence; and thus preached the Apostles, thus the fathers of the church, and thus their successors.

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The fruit of their doctrines has been great, it has been worthy of the cause; it was the cause of human nature, of religion confined to no sect, sworn to no master; it was alike the cause of the Christian, the Jew, the followers of Mahomet, and Confucius; it was the cause of universal humanity.

But we will confine our view to the effect of the doctrine of charity in this island: and here reference must be had to our public archives, as well those which are still in the possession of the chapters in the different dioceses throughout the kingdom, those which are in the custody of the public in their several repositories, as those also in the possession of private individuals; recourse must also be had to printed books, to writers in past ages, whose labours have collected the gleanings of antiquity, and, by the means of the press, have preserved them for the perusal of ages then unborn; a kind of testimony, to which our laws, and the practice of our courts of law, give sanction; it being not unfrequently the best evidence the nature of the thing is capable of.

Do not all these, taken separately and together, inform us, that all the tithes in the kingdom, every acre of church-land, every thing moving from the produce of the land, assisted and cultivated by the labour of man, which is claimed by the church as tithe, whether prædial, mixed, or personal, takes its origin from this source; were they not all separately, and in the aggregate, the fruit of these doctrines; obtained from our rude and unlettered forefathers as acts of religious duty and moral obligation? If they were not, whence flowed they? From what law of society? From what human precept? A divine right cannot be claimed for them in any Christian country; our constitutional lawyers have uniformly asserted, that a divine right to tithes, certainly ceased with the Jewish theocracy, and they have not proved that it in fact ever existed.

These, therefore, must be taken as facts; that the law of God and of Christ have established the duty of charity in the breast of man; and, that the labourers in the Christian vineyard, have in

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this country cultivated this principle to a productive purpose ; and that, in elder times, a distribution was made to the poor, of part of that estate thus obtained and invested in the ecclesiastics, by the donations of those who had landed possessions, in discharge of their religious and moral duties ;—but those days have long since passed away ;—and, in proportion as the refreshing streams were diverted from their proper current, the principle of charity, ever fruitful in means to accomplish its godlike purposes, has struck, like Moses, from the rock, other fruitful streams to refresh those who stand in need of refreshment ; and, on the basis of fluctuating compassion, has founded a firm municipal right.

In remoter times, when the feudal tenures subsisted in this kingdom, which made no other consideration of man, than as an agent of defence or destruction ; when the maxim, *detur fortiori* was paramount, every claim which the rights of nature or the constitution of the country held sacred ; the voice of the laws or the claims of equity could be heard but seldom, amidst the din of arms ; which the contentions among the descendants of William, the Norman, for the sovereignty of that kingdom, that he had wrested from its old possessors, occasioned ; no wonder if, in such times, the more silent claims of the poor, for that dole which they had been accustomed to receive the distribution of, from the incumbent clergy, were of no avail ; and that, when the immediate descendant of the alliance between the houses of York and Lancaster broke all bounds with the court of Rome, spurned the source whence he had personally received the title of *fidei defensor*, and divided the spoils of the monasteries among his unprincipled courtiers ; no wonder that these claims should have remained dormant ; and, having remained through so long a period in a state of rest, it should be held in these times useless, if not imprudent, to revive them.

Hence, therefore, may be dated the origin of the compulsory maintenance ; hence, as from a channel whose sources have in past
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ages been diverted from their natural and proper current, may be deduced that sterile appearance, which would have closed in scenes of blood or famine, and all its horrid accompaniments; if the legislature, in the age of Elizabeth, awakened from a long apathy to the sufferings of poverty, by those scenes of woe which the Queen's progresses through her kingdom offered to her view, and which occasioned that feeling exclamation, *Pauper ubique jacet!* had not opened, by the compulsion of legal authority, new sources to feed the wretched.

But the distribution of charity was not the total of the loss sustained by the poor; they were, during the earlier ages of this kingdom, used to receive advice, and the direction of their moral conduct, from the exhortations of the clergy; and that not from their pulpits only, but they were the private friends, the patrons, the counsellors, the confessors, of the poor; they held an amazing sway over their minds; a sway, I fear, ill exchanged, both here and in a neighbouring country, for that unhallowed indifference for every thing sacred which now prevails: but here, as there, while the clergy guarded the moral conduct, watched over the industry, the health, the economy, of the parish-poor, they protected their own estates from incumbrance; and, in proportion as their parishioners possessed the moral and economic virtues, in that proportion were the ecclesiastic estates productive to the respective incumbents; because the wants of the poor were less; and a probability of increasing the voluntary contributions of the more opulent parishioners was greater, as the respect the parish held the clergy in increased.

It was with a view to this influence, and to preserve the decaying authority and practice of the clergy in this respect, that those admonitions to charity from the pulpit were enjoined by the ecclesiastic courts, which Dr. Burn mentions; and which prove, that those courts, however *now* they may have fallen into disrepute, felt *then* strongly the obligation upon their suitors, to provide a fund for the poor, not merely to relieve the temporary necessities of

hunger, thirst, or nakedness, but to pour the balm of comfort into their minds, to instruct them in their duties to God and their neighbour, to fix in their hearts a confidence, that although they be poor, and negatived in every comfort of life, yet they may, by a pious and virtuous conduct, diminish the sum of their afflictions here, and lay up a certain treasure of happiness for the life which is to come.

L E T T E R XXVII.

ASSUMING therefore, at present, the foregoing state of the matter as fact; would it not tend in every respect to the advantage of the poor, and, consequently, of the kingdom, (for, alas, the necessitous are the million!) if the resident clergy, be they rectors, vicars, or curates, should have an active and directing control over the management of the poor in their respective parishes; that they may again, as they did formerly, by their precepts, their exhortations, and their examples, introduce such moral, economic, and industrious, habits among the poor, as may tend to make them more comfortable as men, and more respectable as citizens? at the same time, such a control would place the clergy in a much more respectable situation than they at present possess; and it would be a respect flowing from a proper cause; as it would engraft authority upon precept, united with example; and enable them to enforce, in practice, those moral duties, which many of them so eloquently inculcate from the pulpit.

Advertisements of associations, for the commutation of tithes, appear frequently in our public prints: whether a general commutation is practicable, or, if practicable, would be relished by the clergy throughout the kingdom, it is difficult to determine; but, if a commutation should take place, it certainly is worthy the consideration

sideration of the landed interest, whether they should choose to convey any portion of their estates in mortmain as a composition for tithes, free and discharged of *those services*, for which the *tithes themselves* were, by the possessors of those estates, *originally* granted; which services were, amongst other considerations, *that advice, that counsel*, that authoritative injunction, coupled with *example*, which would effect more, by means of good morals, to increase the comforts of the poor, diminish their expenses and the rate collected for their relief, than the whole of the ecclesiastic revenue, applied to the same purpose, under the present execution of the laws.* These sentiments, on the necessity of a national provision for the poor, flow from my pen, in direct opposition to the opinion, so warmly expressed on this topic by you, my friend, in your excellent publication on French agriculture, internal economy, and politics; and in opposition, also, to your idea, so frequently started in conversation, that the poor originally had no right to pecuniary assistance from the state; that they should be left to private charity. The reflection, *Mais cette exemple est un grand et important leçon pour nous; car, indépendamment des vices qu'elle nous présente, et d'une dépense monstrueuse, et d'un encouragement nécessaire à la fainéantise, elle nous découvre la plaie politique de l'Angleterre la plus dévorante, qu'il est également dangereux, pour sa tranquillité et son bonheur, de détruire ou de laisser subsister*, which the Committee of Mendicity, in the Constitutional Assembly of France, threw out with respect to the mischiefs of the English system, arose, from their mistaking the effect of the faulty execution of that system, for the code of laws itself; which remains in a great measure a dead letter. And it is

* I cannot conceal my opinion, that any general commutation for tithes, either in land, corn, or money, or any other valuable consideration, to be extended by force of law throughout the kingdom, would be prejudicial to the *laity*, should it meet, which is not very probable, the approbation of the possessors of tithes; and that the moral and religious duties of life would be less in practice, after such change had taken place, than they are now.

no improbable presumption, that, feeling, as they did, the sacred duty, to provide relief for the poor, they adopted the principle of the English system with their eyes open to the evils of it, because they knew of none better; although most certainly the same sacred duty which requires the expenditure of thirty millions of livres a year, would extend the expense to fifty millions, to one hundred, or to any indefinite sum, if necessity required it: and it was with *them* a sacred duty; for, having possessed themselves of the clerical estates, they could not, in justice to the body of their countrymen, take them to the use of the state, otherwise than as the clergy held them, subject, in some degree, to the maintenance of the poor.

In the mean time, it is the duty, as well as the interest, of those from whom this revenue is collected, there as well as here, to watch over the execution of the laws, and the expenditure of the revenue raised for the poor; which conduct will prevent such a necessity: but if, by negligence, extravagance, or peculation, the urgency of the case should require a larger sum to be raised; it will arise *there*, as it does *here*, from the pockets of those, by whose negligence, or misconduct, such urgency was occasioned.

As to leaving the poor to private contributions, it would, in our present state of civilization, refinement, and general apathy to religious matters, be a cruel and unjust dereliction. Were they to be supported by those alone who are the best members of the society, the compassionate, the religious, and those who live in retirement, would then witness such scenes of distress as would wring every penny from their pockets, or they must become immoveable to every feeling of compassion; while the gay, the joyous, the unfeeling, — those who live in crowds, and in the bustle of the world, — would contribute not a farthing to those scenes of distress from which they are so far removed.

In answer to the supposition, that dire necessity will compel exertions of industry, it is much to be doubted whether extremity of distress

distress generally rouses the human mind, or the faculties of the body, to great active exertions. From amidst those scenes which have required vast exertions to preserve human life, very few have been saved, in proportion to those who have perished. Disastrous voyages, shipwrecks, retreats of armies before a conquering enemy, all prove how few have magnanimity of soul to bear up against extremity of distress: and, of all those circumstances which drive the human mind to apathy or despair, poverty, and its lowering concomitants, cold, hunger, and thirst, are the most formidable; because, in proportion as these debilitate both the body and the mind, does the urgency of the case require the greater activity of exertion: it may, therefore, with great reason, be asserted, that an increase of distress will not occasion an increase of industry.

If the case of the poor in Scotland and Ireland be produced as a proof, that leaving them to private charity would have a better effect than the rates of England, the answer is obvious; that, in Scotland, they are not left to private charity, in their principal cities, but are admitted to a provision out of the funds of the general-session of those cities: and that they emigrate from the Highlands, and the country where agriculture and manufactures do not find them sufficient employment, to those countries where there is employment: and the emigration of the useful subjects of a country has never yet been produced as a proof of the excellence of its internal economy.

Ireland presents, in your accurate and particular account of its internal police, no very flattering prospect of the situation of the poor, either with respect to their modes of life, their moral habits, or their industry. In the first instance, they are, in general, what the English peasantry were five hundred years ago: the cottage, which affords neither window or chimney, where cows, calves, pigs, children, men, and women, all lie on straw together, on the same floor; their raggedness, which approaches to nakedness,
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and the general difuse of shoes and flockings, give one no refined ideas either of their cleanliness or their comforts : and a country where pilfering is carried to that excefs, that turnips are ftolen by the poor in cart-loads, and acres of wheat carried away in a night, is not a country of well-regulated police or good moral principles : neither will the dance in the evening, or the laft polifh which they receive from the dancing-mafter, who is effential to their fystem of education, compound for that excefs of lazinefs, and that weaknefs in their exertions, when *encouraged* to work, which has occafioned you to doubt of the heartinefs of their food, — potatoes, oatmeal, and milk ; although the athletic forms of the men, and the fwarms of children in their miserable cottages, befpeak vigour and health. I muft conclude, therefore, that, were the Irifh to take the forty-third of Elizabeth, together with the confequence flowing from a ftrict execution of it, the poor, as well as the rich, would find their fcale of comfort and prosperity rifing from the change : and were we, in this kingdom, to call the parochial clergy to our affiftance, in preferving an execution of the laws refpecting the poor, more confiftent with the original intention and obvious meaning of thofe laws ; which are calculated to encourage a fpirit of induftry, not of idlenefs ; of economy, not of profufion ; a fpirit of honefty, not of theft ; of religion, not of atheifm ; of fubordination, not of riot ; and if the legiflature of this country fhould ordain fuch to be their line of duty, which certainly is their line of confcientious and honourable intereft ; the fcale of prosperity and comfort among *our* poor would alfo rife, and that of the expenfe attending their maintenance and relief would gradually fubfide.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

THE laws and ordinances of all countries, towards the first periods of their civilization, partake of the rough and ferocious nature of the times and of the inhabitants ; who, being lately emerged from a wild and savage state, although they may be awake to some of the advantages arising from subordination, are not sufficiently refined to be bound by filken chains. But, as society advances, and the social blessings of civilization by degrees unfold themselves, those laws which regulate the multitude take a milder tone, and obedience to them is secured by inclination, as well as duty, until luxury and dissipation, sure prognostics of a falling state, occasion the legislator again to stain the pages of the penal code with blood.

Such has, in part, been the progressive temper of the statute-laws of this country. We find, in past ages, the lower classes of people restrained by a variety of ordinances, which breathe but little of the spirit of humanity ; while they strongly prove, that *here* no portion of those absurd ideas, which have involved France in a scene of horrid anarchy, at any time prevailed. The earliest regulations of written law, which affect the mass of the people, compelled “ those who rank in the class of labourers and artificers, who were able in body, and within the age of threescore years, not living in merchandize, exercising any craft, or having of their own whereon to live, to work, at regulated prices, on pain of imprisonment, and of being burnt with a hot iron.”

Vagabonds, or valiant beggars, as the old acts of parliament call them, were treated with greater rigour : they were to be instantly committed to gaol, to be fed with bread and water, to be set in the stocks, beaten with whips through the towns where they were taken,
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and then sent to the place where they last lived ; and this for the first offence.

For the second offence ; to be scourged two days, to be set in the pillory, and one ear to be cut off.

In short, the category of punishments inflicted, by authority of law, on this description of persons, is too irksome to be dwelt on : but it is such as plainly proves, that our ancestors had no idea of the Gallic principle of equality, of weighing number in the balance against property ; for, we perceive, the multitude is to be restrained by these laws respecting labour, and to be punished for a breach of them : property is exempted.

With respect to those poor who, from age, sickness, or accident, had become impotent, and were compelled, by necessity, to ask alms, they were to subsist on such as they could obtain by begging within certain limits, which seem to have been the hundreds, or towns, where they were born, and, in succeeding times, where they had lived the last three years ; and, if these real objects of compassion wandered beyond those limits, or such as the justices of the peace, within the district, should allot to them, they were to be punished by imprisonment and the stocks, and their children, under the age of five years, might be taken from them, by any person, to be brought up to any honest labour.

Such were the restraints and disabilities under which the lower classes of our fellow-creatures lived in the days of our forefathers ; and such were the punishments to which they were subject for a breach of those laws ; which laws lean to oppression, not to humanity ; to servitude, rather than to freedom.

The lenient spirit of more polished times tacitly relieved them, by degrees, from a great portion of these restraints, by ceasing to inflict the punishment annexed to a breach of the law ; and, by so doing, the spirit of the times outstripped the attention of the legislature, to the happiness and ease of the people.

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No law ought to remain unrepealed, which is not intended generally to be enforced; a partiality in this respect has not in view the welfare of the governed, and may descend to that *misera servitus ubi lex est aut vaga aut inconcinna*. The volumes of the Statutes at Large are, on that account, in some measure a grievance; because, in a code of positive institutions, many of them highly penal, which has swelled within this century to so enormous a bulk* those acts of parliament that, from their long disuse, as well as from the remote antiquity of their original formation, not being adapted to the spirit of the present times, may be called obsolete; and those also which are not commonly put in practice, but may, at the same time, be used as concealed arms by the malicious, to annoy their unwary and incautious fellow-subjects, as well as those which still remain the written law of the land, although not the practical municipal rule of the day, should not remain in our law-books; increasing the number of pages, which are, without them, too numerous.

Such are the reflections which have occurred to me, on the evidence before us, with respect to the state of the poor, as far as it relates to confining them to certain parishes, which we, in these days, call their places of settlement. But it is time to recollect, that, as the judgement should not suffer itself to be led captive by the imagination, so neither should the discursive researches of the antiquary lead the pen away from the more immediate purpose of this letter; which is intended to point out the present situation of the poor, both with respect to the law of settlements and certificates, as far as their situation may be affected, not only by the

* Pickering's edition of the Statutes at Large is comprised in thirty-eight volumes octavo; the last six volumes of which are remarkably thick, and in bulk near twice the quantity of paper in the first six volumes; and only the first nine volumes and about half the tenth include the acts of parliament to the end of the last century; the remaining twenty-eight volumes are filled with the acts of the present century, and fifteen of them with the acts of the present reign.

law of the land, but also by the practice of the magistrates ; together with such alterations as may tend to increase the general stock of industry : permit me, therefore, after a quick retreat from this short digression upon the temper of former times, to re-enter on my subject, which regards those days in which we live, and also those which are to come, and may pass away before the view of our posterity.

Although the antiquity of restraints on the liberty of the poor to go from place to place, as they imagine they may best be able to find provision and employment, is of a date prior to the days of Elizabeth, yet the idea of a parish-settlement certainly arose from the parish-rate, enacted in the forty-third year of her reign ; nor does it seem a remarkable circumstance, that some distinct rules should be drawn by the legislature how each parish might know its own poor, and be able to confine the expenditure of the rate to its parishioners only.

But this was not all : each parish being obliged to maintain its own poor, it was prudent to do it by their own officers, and under their own inspection : hence arose a restriction, that, however just it might be with respect to the interests of parishes one with another, is injustice with respect to the poor themselves, and a considerable obstacle to the encouragement of general labour and industry throughout the kingdom.

Confinement of the poor within their respective parishes, which is the principal object in the statutes 13th and 14th Charles II. cap. 12, is the restriction alluded to ; because every person, whatever may be his ingenuity, industry, or abilities, falls under the scope of this law, if the parish-officers choose to complain to a magistrate that he is likely to become chargeable ; unless such person occupies a tenement of ten pounds yearly value, or lives on property in house or land of his own.

Adam Smith attributes the very unequal price of labour in England, in places of no great distance from each other, to this cause ;

cause; and he also says, that, to remove a man from the parish where he chooses to reside, is an abridgement of natural liberty.

Mr. Hay, in his plan, published in 1735, would have all notion of parochial settlement abolished, as being the root from which every evil relating to the poor sprung; every parish being in a state of expensive war with the rest of the nation, regarding the poor of all other places as aliens, and caring not what becomes of them; Mr. Acland, Mr. Townshend, Sir William Young, have also professed an unfavourable opinion of the law of settlements; and the last gentleman has offered to the House of Commons the heads of a bill, that would, in a great measure, have removed the objectionable restraints on so large a portion of our fellow-subjects, and would have simplified the law on this point; the expenses arising from which cost the occupiers of houses and land, throughout England and Wales, above fifty-five thousand pounds annually, in the years 1783, 1784, 1785; and it is much to be feared that these expenses are an increasing, not a decreasing, evil.

Neither the law nor the equity of this case seems to have been clearly understood by parliament, when the restrictive acts passed; they proceeded on this principle, that the object of expense between parishes was the only point of consequence to be considered; whereas, in fact, it ought not to have come into question at all: the 43d of Elizabeth, section the third, providing for any case where the inhabitants of a parish might *not be able* to maintain the poor, by calling in aid other parishes within the hundred; and the parish in which I am now writing is an instance in point, that this section has been frequently carried into execution; other parishes, within the hundred, having been called in aid to relieve the poor of Clare, the expression *not able* must be allowed to be of great latitude; the meaning annexed to the expression by the legislature cannot be easily defined; according to the common acceptation of the word, no such a case can well exist, every parish in the kingdom may be *able* to maintain its own poor; and, if *ability* is to be explained by *choice*,

few will be found *willing* : the word must therefore have some relation to moral convenience, and then it would depend on the quantum, or reasonable proportion, of his means of living, which moral obligations would induce a man to part with towards the maintenance of his poor neighbour ; it must then be measured by the principle of charity. Possibly, was this undefined expression to be precisely explained by some rule of proportion to occupations in a parish, the contests between parishes would be at an end, and they would arise only between hundreds. Even this would greatly diminish the source of litigations ; more especially if incorporations of hundreds, for the maintenance of the poor, should become general.

Therefore, as the law formerly stood, although not as it is now executed, the contest, if any, ought to lie between hundreds, and not between parishes. This alone would be a great relief, not only to the poor, with respect to general convenience, by increasing the market for work, but by the consequential diminution of the expenses of maintaining them ; supposing it to be true, that, the more a poor family *earns*, the less parochial assistance it requires. If the contest lay between counties it would be better.

But there ought to be no litigations at all about the settlements of the poor ; “ *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle* ;” there should be no attorneys bills in overseers accounts : it is cheaper to relieve, than to remove, a family by a suit at the sessions ; which, if the overseers are peculiarly astute in watching over the interests of their parishes, or, in other words, are tenacious of their opinions, will go into the King’s Bench, and the successful parish may find an honest family removed, to their utter ruin, at double the expense that would have maintained them and their posterity for ever.

If a man of property has half a score contiguous farms in his occupation, it would be extreme folly to station a certain portion of his farming-stock at each individual farm, and not allow that
stock

stock to migrate to his other farms, as food, utility, or the general convenience, and attention to profit, might give occasion. To fix, irrevocably, three score sheep in this farm, six score in that, so many bullocks in one, so many in another, would be a remarkable instance of bad management. A good manager certainly would rather form a calculation of what stock the whole number of acres in his occupation might support, with the greatest probability of the greatest profit; and, with that view, would remove them from one part of his estate to the other, without having any respect to the division of his farms. — So stands the interest of the nation with respect to the poor; it is one large domain, and the stock, or people, ought to be farmed *quoad hoc* in the same manner; and similar means would produce corresponding effects: the proprietor of land would turn *his acres* to the greatest possible profit; *the nation* would produce the greatest possible quantity of industry; and the poor would be maintained at the least possible expense.

L E T T E R XXIX.

A TOTAL repeal of the law of settlements might, in the present state of things, promote vagrancy, which is a disorder, both in morals and industry, tending to the worst consequences that can arise from population: the abolition of settlements, therefore, cannot be recommended; a modification of them, on principles more consistent with the general advantage of society, is the whole that should be attempted.

The preamble to the act of parliament, confining the poor to their respective parishes, states, that the people endeavour to settle themselves where there is the best stock, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy;

destroy; and, when they have consumed them, that they go to another parish, and at last become rogues and vagabonds.

The statute-law was, in the reign of Charles the Second, sufficiently severe to protect the woods from being burnt or destroyed, if severity of punishment operated to that effect; and the laws respecting vagrancy were, at that time, not less penal: if any additional severity might have been necessary, the vagrant-act, of recent memory, is not deficient in that respect. If severity of statute-law will not protect our woods from burning and destruction by the poor, will the law of settlements do it? Certainly it is not the probable effect arising from the confinement of the poor to parishes where they cannot obtain a fair market-price for their labour, that they should pay respect to those wastes, and woody tracks, which produce no call for agricultural industry. The reasons adduced in the preamble to the act of settlements must, therefore, fall to the ground, and the inducement to the enacting clauses will then remain: that the poor will put themselves into a situation to live at the least possible expense to their neighbours, by going where they can find employment, and where they are most likely to maintain themselves. And ought they not to be permitted so to do, unless other consequences than those stated in the preamble to the act restraining them, or, at the least, those consequences themselves, are to be apprehended?

The effect most to be apprehended is; that such liberty might tend to the encouragement of vagrancy, or such a wandering plan of life, as would not permit parish-officers, if fortunately they should be so inclined, to introduce any settled industrious mode of education among their children; as such an education is one of the most desirable objects to be obtained in the discipline of the poor; it may be proper to modify that restraint which is thought necessary to be retained over them, so as to be most conducive to this end; for, although the present execution of the poor-laws proves, in general, either that the overseers are ignorant of their power in this respect,

respect, or, which is more probable, dislike the trouble of attending to youthful industry; yet it requires no extraordinary prophetic foresight to assert, that this must become, and shortly, a serious part of their office; or we shall find what the French Committee of Mendicity have asserted to be too true; that the system of our poor-laws, as at present executed, “is the most destructive political gangrene in the English constitution.”

If the poor were permitted to remove from place to place, as best suited the interests of industry, it would be reasonable, that the same authority which granted them the liberty should connect it with such regulations as are necessary to the safety and advantage of the state; which might probably be effected by preventing that liberty, which was intended for the encouragement of industry, degenerating into vagrancy; by making it of immediate use, in diminishing the expenses of their maintenance, and by offering a prospect of advantage to posterity, from the certain good tendency of an industrious education.

To effect the first end, box-clubs should be the means; which should be obligatory on all the poor while in health, and without a family of children; or, possibly, the *lex trium liberorum* might with propriety be the point of exemption; but those who migrate, as the only good reason for their migration must be larger wages; should contribute a larger proportion of their earnings; if one-thirty-sixth were the general proportion, one-twenty-fourth might be a proper proportion of the earnings of those who leave their parishes:

Government has an undoubted right, on every principle of natural justice, to direct, in some measure, the education of those children whose parents are chargeable to society; and this arises from the reciprocity on the part of government, to preserve all the governed from perishing by want.

Where there are seminaries instituted for educating children in habits of industry, the poor should be compelled to send their children to them in those parishes where they reside; the migrated families,

families, by the alternative of the attendance of their children at the school of industry, or an order of removal of themselves to their place of settlement.

These terms being complied with, the poor might, without fear of their becoming vagrants, or neglect of industrious habits in the rising generation, be permitted to seek their bread, by means of labour and industry, wherever good wages will enable them best to find it; and a foundation of a fund would be laid for their maintenance when in distress, which would be productive in proportion as the number of the migrants increased, or in other words, as the total sum earned by the industry of the nation increased.

Taking one of the heads of Sir William Young's bill as the ground-work of our proposed regulation, the general idea would stand thus.

No person shall be removed to his place of settlement until actually chargeable to the parish where he resides, provided that he has made oath, before two neighbouring magistrates, of the place of his legal settlement; and that, from the time of his first residence in the parish, he has contributed, according to the rules of the society, one-twenty-fourth part of his earnings to the box-club of that parish; and hath also, from the same time, sent his children, above the age of six years, and under the age of eleven, to the school of industry in the said parish; and having so resided ten years in any parish, without receiving any parochial relief whatever, he shall obtain a settlement where he hath so resided.

It would farther tend to prevent vagrancy, if the pauper should be obliged to obtain the approbation of two magistrates, residing near the parish whence he removes, testified by their signing their consent, and specifying the place to which they allow the pauper to go, prior to his actual migration; which consent should be immediately delivered to the overseers of the parish where he intends to reside. But no evidence that these conditions were not complied with should be allowed to be given in any contest at law as to his place

place of settlement ; because it would tend to create litigation, and could be of no other service, the magistrates having the power to punish the omission by sending the pauper back to his place of settlement.

These regulations would certainly diminish the sources of legal contests, on the variety of cases respecting settlements and certificates ; and would tend to bring those disputes, which are so very inimical to the pockets of the parishioners and the peace of the parish, into a very narrow compass ; they would also open to the poor the means of carrying their industry to the best market ; at the same time that the obligation to contribute to a box-club, in a greater proportion than if they had remained where they were settled, might tend to keep them from migrating, unless the prospect of advantage was considerable ; the being obliged to send their children to a school of industry would also check that spirit of vagrancy, which idleness, during infancy and youth, is apt to promote. But these obligations proceed on the idea that box-clubs and schools of industry were established by authority of parliament throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws ; for, vain would be the regulations, if, for want of these institutions, they could not be complied with ; and it is much to be feared, that, whatever may be the excellence of them, they will not institute themselves throughout the kingdom in general, without the assistance of the legislature, although the good arising from them is already experienced in many parishes.

There seems uniformly one false principle, that is inconsistent with that degree of freedom which is the best inheritance of all of us, constantly pervading this head of the laws respecting the poor, exclusive of the restraint which the law of certificates occasions. The principle alluded to, is the right claimed by the officers of a parish to remove those whom they may deem *likely* to become chargeable ; the undefined idea, of what *may possibly happen in future*, should not be permitted to operate in the latitude it does ; for, it is not necessary

to the interest of the parish, but in a most insignificant degree; and even that trifling interest would disappear instantly, on the principle being exploded, and a general practice diametrically opposite prevailing; all men are liable, as the law at present stands, to be taken by a warrant before a magistrate, if a parish-officer thinks proper to declare his belief that the individual is *likely* to become chargeable; and this assertion may sometimes be founded on pique, interest, or private resentment; consequently we are all liable to this impertinent intrusion, and, what is worse, to an examination into our circumstances and situation in life; the knowledge of which should be in the power of every man to preserve in his own breast, unless he be so suspicious a character that the safety of society or of individuals requires a public investigation of his situation and circumstances; but, in this case, the exposition of the private concerns of an individual is founded solely on this trifling plea of interest, — that a parish may not expend a trifle by *once* relieving him.

Therefore, the paltry consideration of a few pence, in the expenditure of an individual parish, exposes all his Majesty's subjects to the possibility of this disagreeable scrutiny into their private affairs; and this on the unfounded assertion of a parish-officer, that a *refiant may* become chargeable; a very disagreeable consequence, flowing from a very insignificant cause. Actual relief received from a parish ought to be the only case where such an intrusion should take place; and that rule, if universal, would produce no general or even partial inconvenience; and it would, at the same time, relieve all from the possibility of being placed in a humiliating, vexatious, and disagreeable, situation, without sufficient reason.

L E T T E R X X X.

THE natural right of the poor to the assistance of society, when, by misfortune, ill health, or age, their labour is not equal to their support; and also the propriety of allowing them the liberty of removal from one place to another, for the purpose of rendering their labour more equal to their support, having been discussed, this paper shall be dedicated to the purpose of examining the expediency of raising the price of labour; desiring that the reader will recollect agricultural labour is principally adverted to; and that the data, from which the conclusions will be drawn, may be found among the evidence which has been collected in some of the former papers on this subject.

It has already been asserted as a truth, in a manner self-evident, that the price of labour should be equal to maintain the labourer in that situation of life he occupies in society, whether as a husband, a father, or a son; consequently, that it should enable him, while in health, to support a wife, children, or aged parents; and the evidence produced has tended to prove that it was so in former times; before the establishment of a compulsive maintenance, and before those adscititious and enervating luxuries of life, spirits and tea, impaired the strength of the parent, debilitated his progeny, and wasted the produce of his labour.

The rating of wages, by authority of parliament, might also, in those days, have tended to preserve a just proportion between the price of labour and the necessities of life; for, if the practice had not that good effect, it operated to the disadvantage of the labourer; because, by limiting the price, it restrained the spirit of competition; all the statutes, from the reign of Edward the Third to that of James the First, on that head, being restrictive against giving more, and not compulsive to give the price rated by the justices;

consequently, they tended rather to reduce than to raise the price of labour.

But let us examine how the proportion was preserved in times antecedent to the establishment of a poor's rate, and how it is preserved now, and let us make a comparison of the facts: the means are in our hands, and the result may establish a serviceable truth.

In the twenty-third of Edward the Third, the price of agricultural labour was regulated, in many instances, by parliament. — Two of these shall be taken; harvest-wages, reaping corn by the day, three-pence; threshing wheat, by the quarter, two-pence half-penny: in that year, 1338, the price of wheat, by the quarter, was three shillings and four-pence; therefore, a day's work in harvest would not produce quite one-thirteenth of a quarter of wheat, and the price of threshing a quarter was one-sixteenth of its value. In 1792, the price of a day's harvest-work, in the cheapest counties, was, at the least, half-a-crown, and the price of threshing wheat was also about half-a-crown a quarter: the average-price of wheat, throughout the year, might be about two guineas a quarter: the labour of threshing, therefore, was, to the price of the wheat, as one to sixteen or seventeen; and a day's harvest-wages bore the same proportion to the same quantity of wheat. In the years 1387, 1389, wheat was threshed at four-pence a quarter, and reaped at seven-pence an acre. In 1388, the price of wheat was four shillings a quarter: in this instance, the price of threshing shall be taken, because the price of reaping an acre of wheat must then, as now, depend on many circumstances, and rise or fall accordingly: threshing then produced one-twelfth of the value of the wheat. In 1446, a reaper received five-pence a day; the price of wheat was, in 1445, four shillings and six-pence a quarter; and, in 1447, eight shillings; therefore, a day's harvest-work, at that time, produced one-tenth of a quarter of wheat: in 1445, the year preceding the price of reaping, and the year succeeding it,

it, one-nineteenth yearly; the *Chronicon Pretiosum* giving no instance of the price of wheat in 1446: the average of these prices of labour is one-fourteenth of a quarter of wheat; and the price of the same articles of labour, in the year 1792, having been taken at one-sixteenth of the value of a quarter of wheat, it is manifest that the price of agricultural labour was then somewhat higher, in proportion to the price of wheat, than at present; that is to say, as a fourteenth is to a sixteenth; which would increase harvest-wages to about three shillings a day, and threshing wheat to three shillings a quarter, supposing the average-price of wheat to be two guineas a quarter.

So few instances occur when the price of wheat and the price of agricultural labour can be obtained in the same year, before any regular registers of the price of wheat were kept, that the exactness of the average cannot be depended on; nor is the calculation pretended to be correctly exact; but it is apprehended that both the average and the calculation are sufficiently so, to warrant the conclusion that is inferred from them: and it should also be recollected, that no compulsory maintenance for the poor was established during the period in which these averages have been taken.

In 1661, the justices of Essex, in their Easter-sessions, fixed the rates of agricultural labour for that year: the reaper, one shilling and ten-pence a day harvest-wages; the thresher, exactly the same price per quarter: the price of wheat was, by the Windfor-table, 3*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.*; by which it is manifest, that a day's harvest-wages, and the threshing a quarter of wheat, would not either of them purchase one-thirty-fifth part of the quarter. At this period the compulsory maintenance had been established near forty years.

In 1682, among the wages of servants and labourers in husbandry, rated by the justices at their quarter-sessions, holden at Bury, in Suffolk, and recorded in Sir John Cullum's History of Hawstead, we find that a man-reaper's wages, in harvest, was one shilling

ling and eight-pence; a common labourer, in summer, one shilling; in winter, ten-pence: the average-price of wheat we find, by the Windsor-table, to have been, that year, 1*l.* 19*s.* 1*d.*; a day's harvest-wages would, therefore, in 1682, purchase one-twenty-third part of a quarter of wheat; a day's common wages, in summer, about a thirty-ninth part; a day's common wages, in winter, about a forty-seventh part. It should be mentioned that these prices are all without meat and drink.

In 1668, Mr. Gregory King computed the ordinary income of labourers and out-servants at fifteen pounds a year, to a family which he supposed to consist of three and a half persons; and he computed the weekly expense of such families to be about twenty-pence a head. About the same time, Lord-Chief-Justice Hale computed the necessary expenses of a labourer's family, consisting of six persons, the father, mother, two children able to do something, and two not able, at ten shillings a week, or twenty-six pounds a year: the average-price of wheat was, by the Windsor-table, that year, 1*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.*; and the average-price for twenty-five years, taken annually, from 1655 to 1680, during which period of time the Chief-Justice must have made his calculation, was generally above 2*l.* 5*s.* never under 2*l.* 2*s.* a quarter. We have seen the rates of wages at the Essex quarter-sessions in Easter 1661, and at the Suffolk quarter-sessions in 1682; the inference, with respect to the ratio which agricultural labour bore, when wages were rated, to the necessaries of life, can easily be drawn; and, when drawn, will prove that the practice was not favourable to the labourer.

The difficulty of obtaining instances of the prices of labour, in years so long passed away, prevent me from selecting a sufficient number of facts to form a very exact average; but it is presumed that sufficient has been done to lay a foundation for the following assertions:

First.

First. — That, before the rate operated to the relief of the poor, their wages were larger, in proportion to the price of wheat, than at present.

Secondly. — That since the operation of the 43d of Elizabeth, by raising a sum in every parish for their relief, their wages have been less, in proportion to the price of wheat, during the *last century*, than at *present*, as the same quantity of work will now purchase a sixteenth of a quarter of wheat, which, in 1661, would purchase only a thirty-ninth part, and, in 1682, a twenty-third part of a quarter of wheat only. To judge how such a price for labour, so disproportioned to the price of wheat, affected the poor's rate in those days, is not at this distance of time in our power, except in those parishes where accident may have preserved the account of the rate raised in those years; and, in such a case, some idea might be formed by comparing the then rate with the present, supposing the state of population and of the manufactures to be also known.

Thirdly. — It appears, not only that the rating of wages tended to depress the price of labour; but that, before the poor partook of a revenue raised from the pockets of their fellow-subjects; the unfeeling hand of legislation having precluded misery from its last resource, — the compassion of the wealthy, by restraining them from begging, and their opulent neighbours from giving them relief, through fear of imprisonment; the poor must have been in a most deplorable situation, and must have continued so until the beginning of the reign of Henry the Eighth, when justices of the peace were empowered to licence aged and impotent persons, to beg within certain districts. This also will, in some measure, account for the deficiency of our population in those times, it being, in the fourteenth century, not one-fourth of what it is at present.

Therefore, although the price of labour might be, through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, centuries, higher, in proportion to the price of wheat, than at present; the rough temper of the times, instanced by the concurrent acts of legislation, left the
poor

poor without any resource in the hour of distress, except from the ecclesiastical estates; and, with respect to the time passed since the 43d of Elizabeth, it has been seen, that the price of labour was much lower, in proportion to the price of wheat, during the last century, than at present.

The conclusion which follows, from the few facts that apply to the question, is, that, in the three centuries preceding the poor's rate, they were in a worse situation than at present, although their wages were more proportionate to the necessities of life; because there was no resource left to them from private charity, and a compulsive maintenance was not established, to which they might apply in the hour of distress; and through the seventeenth century, after a compulsive maintenance had been established, they appear to have received wages less proportionate to the necessities of life than they do at present; consequently, their present situation, with their wages, is preferable to their former.

L E T T E R XXXI.

BUT it may be objected, that the instances produced, having mentioned the concurrent price of only one material article of life, wheat; the others, as clothing, fire, house-rent, butcher's meat, and a long train of *et cæteras*, have not been glanced at.

This difficulty may be solved by a shorter, and probably a more satisfactory, proof, than a detail of the concurrent prices of a long category of articles, at the several periods when the foregoing notices were taken, were such an accurate detail in our power; the proof alluded to is the opinion of Adam Smith on this subject, who says, "The money-price of corn regulates that of all other home-made commodities; the real value of every other commodity
being

being measured and determined by the proportion which its average money-price bears to the money-price of corn."

The detail of the facts and arguments, from which this principle is established by Dr. Smith, would probably be thought tedious and unnecessary, having his name as authority for the opinion; a shorter proof may be thought a better proof; and a plain and intelligible *forites* may effect as much in a few words as a long argument in many pages. — For instance :

The labour of man should be equal to his sustenance, the principal article of which is corn. — By the labour of our poor are home-made commodities produced and manufactured; what produces or manufactures commodities is the measure of their value; what sustains the poor is the efficient means of their labour. Corn principally is the sustenance of the poor; therefore, corn is the measure of the value of home-made commodities; or, in other words, the money-price of corn regulates the money-price of those articles, which are necessary to the sustenance of the poor.

Another point to be settled before we proceed, is to ascertain the articles which common consent will agree to call the *necessaries of life*; because no wages of labour will provide for a consumption, *ad libitum*, of every article of food and clothing; which a poor family may *choose* to make use of; and, at the same time, a deduction of every article, not absolutely necessary to the sustentation of human life, would leave so little to be purchased by the labour of man, as to admit of no doubt on the question.

No writer has delivered his sentiments on this topic with that precision of idea, that appropriate happiness of expression, and, what is best, with that full knowledge of the subject, as the same writer we have before referred to: his opinion therefore will, with no small degree of propriety, stand in the place of any fluctuating desultory notions, which humanity, misled by luxury, might throw out; this one idea being granted, that the comforts of life and the necessaries are different things; the first are properly within the

reach of those whose property, ingenuity, or industry, puts them beyond the probability of seeking relief from the rate levied for the poor ; the last comprehend only those articles which are necessary to the preservation of human life in health, and the person in such clothing as not to offend the eye of decency and propriety.

By necessaries, Adam Smith says, he understands not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people to be without ; and explains himself, by admitting, that a linen shirt and leather shoes are among those things which the poorest creditable person of either sex in this country would be ashamed to appear in public without ; salt, candles, leather, soap, and fuel, he admits as necessaries, to a certain degree of consumption.

Grain, and other vegetables, with the help of milk, cheese, and butter, or oil where no butter is to be had, he affirms, are known from experience, without any assistance from butcher's meat, to afford the most nourishing and invigorating diet ;* and therefore he doubts whether butcher's meat be a necessary of life any where ; but, not determining that point, he calls all other things luxuries, speaking of articles of diet, without meaning, by this appellation, to throw the smallest degree of reproach on a temperate use of them ; he says, " Beer and ale in Great Britain, and wine even in wine-countries, I call luxuries : a man of any rank may, without any reproach, abstain totally from such liquors ; nature does not render them necessary for the support of life, and custom no where renders it indecent to live without them."

Many names, and some of eminence in the political as well as in the literary world, have given sanction to strictures on our police respecting the poor, from the time of Lord Verulam to the

* See page 287, of the 19th volume of the *Annals of Agriculture*, where an extract from the Editor's *Tour in Ireland* is quoted, much in point with Adam Smith's opinion.

present day ; but this particular topic, the wages of labour, has not been glanced at until lately ; hence we may collect, that it was not thought a striking object ; and may also venture to assert, that no material, no glaring, disproportion subsisted between wages and the necessities of life, during those times, when Bacon, Lord Hale, King, Davenant, Firmin, Defoe, Locke, Sir Josiah Child, Cary, Hay, Alcock, Lord Hillsborough, Sir Richard Lloyd, Fielding, and Burn, turned their attention to this subject ; for, had any material disproportion prevailed in the opinions of these writers, or any of them, that disproportion would have been suggested as a cause of the mischief complained of, have been adverted to, and a remedy proposed ; but we can collect no arguments from their writings, either for or against a rise of wages ; and, as great a disproportion subsisted in their times between the price of corn and the price of labour as at present, their silence may therefore be construed into an acquiescence, that no foundation of complaint existed.

Indeed, no hints of any weight, no assertions of serious authority, can be found in the writings of our forefathers, on which we may reason, as on a solid foundation ; building our argument on the respect due to a great name ; which, when fact, experience, strict demonstration, and analogical inference, fail us, may serve as a reasonable cause of belief, though by no means of implicit conviction.

But the same excellent, moral, and political, casuist, whose treatise on the Wealth of Nations we have just had recourse to, gives his decided opinion on this topic, which fell directly under his attention.

He informs us, that, “ in Great Britain, the wages of labour seem to be evidently more than what is precisely necessary to bring up a family.

“ The real recompense of labour, the real quantity of the necessities and conveniences of life, which it can procure to the la-

bourer, has, during the course of the present century, increased perhaps in a still greater proportion than its money-price.

“ The wages of labour have been continually increasing since the time of Henry the Eighth, and in the greater part of the branches of trade, the profit of stock has been diminishing.

“ In Great Britain, the wages of country-labour approach nearer to those of manufacturing-labour, than they are said to have done in the last century or in the beginning of the present.”

These extracts plainly declare the opinion that this author held on this subject: those, who wish to see the ground-work of his reasoning, will find full cause to be satisfied with the solidity of his observations and the precision of his arguments, by perusing books the first, the second, the fourth, and fifth, of this valuable work.

Mr. Townsend concurs in the same opinion; he says, in his Dissertation on the Poor-Laws, “ if we take the average of sixty years, which terminated at the commencement of the present century, we shall find the price of wheat to have been six shillings and four-pence halfpenny per bushel, whereas for the subsequent sixty years it was only five shillings; and for the last twenty years, ending with the year 1782, not more than six shillings and sixpence; yet, during that long period, in which provisions were the cheapest, the poor's rates were continually advancing; that this distress does not arise from the high price of soap, leather, candles, salt, and other small articles, needful in a family, will appear not only from the superior advance in the price of labour, in the proportion of six to four within a century, but from hence, that where the price of labour is the highest, and provisions cheapest, there the poor-rates have been most exorbitant.”

Mr. Howlett is the only writer of reputation who has advanced an opinion different from that which has been generally received, or silently acquiesced in, by all who have, in past times, left us their thoughts on the state of the poor, and diametrically opposite to the
sentiments

sentiments of Adam Smith and Mr. Townshend, who have very lately had the subject under their consideration.

Mr. Howlett says, in his pamphlet, which has been already noticed, part the second, section the first, “ the great and real cause of the increased proportion of the poor, as well as of the increased expense of maintaining them, is, that the price of labour has *not* advanced so much as the price of provisions.” And he concludes with this observation, “ either raise the wages of the poor, or give them provisions as they had them forty years ago.”

Laying aside, for a time, all the respect that is due to the authority of great names; leaving at present out of the question the uniform assertions of many eminent writers on this subject, from the age of Queen Elizabeth to the present, who have one and all complained of the profligacy of the poor; a profligacy which seems to have gathered strength, in proportion as relief at a vestry, or by the order of a magistrate, supplied the place of the wages of industry; and who have attributed the increase of this poverty and expense in their maintenance to that cause principally; let us meet this assertion, and examine it by test of fact, adduced by Mr. Howlett himself.

The average-expense of the poor, the three years preceding 1776, is produced; and the average of the expense, in the years 1783, 1784, 1785, is also produced; the first amounts to 1,529,780*l.* *os.* *1d.* per annum; the last to 2,004,238*l.* *5s.* *11d.*; the difference between them is 474,458*l.* *5s.* *10d.* If the price of the necessaries of life increased in the last period in an equal proportion with the expenses of the poor, that is to say, between a third and a fourth more than their price at the first period, the assertion might be warranted by the consequence in its fullest extent; for, the price of labour certainly has not risen a third, or even a fourth: but let us examine the fact.

During the years of the first period, the average-price of wheat was, in 1773, 2*l.* 19*s.* *1d.*; in 1774, 2*l.* 15*s.* *1d.*; in 1775, 2*l.* 11*s.* 3*d.*; the average of the three years is 2*l.* 15*s.* 1½*d.*

During

During the years of the second period, the average-price of wheat was, in 1783, 2*l.* 7*s.* 1*d.*; in 1784, 2*l.* 7*s.* 2*d.*; in 1785, 1*l.* 16*s.* 11*d.*; the average of the three years is 2*l.* 3*s.* 8½*d.*

Therefore the price of the necessaries of life, or, in other words, the money-price of corn, which regulates the price of the necessaries of life, *i. e.* home-made commodities, was in the last period cheaper than in the first, in the proportion of between a fourth and a fifth; and the expenses of the poor in the last period were greater than their expenses in the first, between a third and a fourth.

L E T T E R XXXII.

MR. Howlett supposes that each individual consumes at least a quarter of wheat a year; a family of six therefore consumes six quarters annually; corn, therefore, costs such a family annually, on the average above-mentioned, the three years preceding 1776 inclusively, 16*l.* 10*s.* 9*d.*; and 13*l.* 2*s.* 3*d.* the three years preceding 1785 inclusively; consequently, the difference between those sums, 3*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.* remains in the pocket of the family, to expend in other necessaries, in the last period more than in the first; and, taking the number of labouring poor individuals in England and Wales to be at six millions and a quarter, as Mr. Howlett states them, during both the periods, the whole of their expenditure for wheat would, in the last period, be less than in the former 3,567,708*l.*; and we have seen that their expenses in the last period have exceeded their expenses in the first near half a million.

Having substantiated this fact, we will now examine the articles which the *taxes*, during the American war, had increased in price in 1785 beyond that in 1776. It has been proved, that the price of corn regulates the price of the other articles of necessary consumption;

tion; therefore, as corn was cheaper, they could not be materially dearer, but by the operation of some tax.

Had the American war, in 1785, occasioned any additional duty on any article which may be called a necessary of life? Was any duty laid on milk, cheese, butter, soap, leather, candles, butcher's meat, linen, cloth, firing, to which they were not equally subject in 1776, if subject to any tax at all? The answer is a negative: therefore how the price of all, or any of them, could be increased one-fifth, by the means of taxation, I cannot discover; neither can it be granted as a fact, that leather, soap, candles, butter, cheese, cost one-fifth more in 1785 than in the years immediately preceding the American war: that these articles might some of them be somewhat dearer, may be fact; but, although the exact proportion cannot easily be ascertained, the assertion may be safely ventured, that they had not increased a fifth in price. Beer, spirits, tea, sugar, snuff, tobacco, were increased in price during this war; but as these cannot be numbered among the necessities of life; and the first, the only article, the use of which can be approved of, is generally found the labourer in agriculture by his master; it cannot form a general article of unavoidable expense.

We have seen that the average-price of wheat, during the first period, was so much more than during the last, as to make a difference of 3*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.* annually, in the expenditure of a family of six people; and the sum it costs such a family for corn, in the last period, is more than half the probable earnings of a labourer's family; therefore the expenses of that family, in all other articles of consumption, could not be increased more than it had saved in the proportional price of wheat, had the price of those articles increased one-fifth, as Mr. Howlett has asserted.

Where then rests the proof, that the number of poor, and the increased expense of maintaining them, arises from the price of labour not having risen in proportion to the price of the necessities of life? And where do we perceive the cause for an increase of agricultural

agricultural wages, which are known to have risen two-pence in the shilling in daily labour since the last century, and in task-work much more? The price of corn has not risen in any such a proportion, and the price of corn regulates the price of home-made commodities. If greater wages are given, they will be given for expenses in articles widely different from the necessities of life; they will be given for the encouragement of idleness, by the increase of the excise-revenue. Idleness is the root of all evil;—articles of excise are the moisture which nourishes that root.

But, while our reason can find no cause for a rise of wages, both that and our humanity plead strongly for some encouragement to industry; because it is apprehended, that a prospect of reward is a more active and honourable inducement than a fear of punishment. So thought and so wrote William Shakespeare, in 1581. The human mind is sooner roused to action by a hope of rising, than by a fear of falling: that apprehension cannot pervade the mass of labouring-people;

So safely low the poor, they cannot fall.

But no situation in this country should be beneath a probability of advancement. Hope should be permitted to travel through life with all of us. When that pleasing companion, that chearful ray of untried felicity, is excluded from our sight, our journey is gloomy indeed: despondence and apathy then are associated with us; and misery, as Trincalo says, acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows.

The consolidation of small farms, where the practice prevails to that extent as to leave no small occupation for the labourer who might have saved money sufficient, or, by a course of honest and industrious conduct, have obtained credit sufficient, to stock and farm a few acres of land, most certainly operates to a great discouragement of industry.

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In parishes where this practice so generally prevails, there is no other chance for him, whose manual labour *tills* the land, to *reap* the produce of it, than by occupying the glebe of the parish, or those lands which have been left in trust for the uses of particular charities. The proper tenants of such lands, and also of the glebe, if the incumbent does not occupy it himself, are the industrious poor; and, in such cases, the parish-rates should become the security for the rent.

If box-clubs were generally established, such of the subscribers as have continued their payments a given number of years, who might be thought by the parish-officers worthy to be trusted with a small occupation of land, should be permitted to draw out of the stock the amount of their subscriptions, deducting such sums as they may have received from the club, whenever such an opportunity of occupying land might offer. In that case, those who have migrated from their parishes to obtain greater wages, and have paid a larger proportion of their earnings to the stock, as was proposed, would have a proportional greater chance of rising in their situations.

To appropriate any part of the compulsory maintenance to the encouragement of youthful industry, might possibly be thought an unwarrantable perversion; but it certainly would not be an illegal application of part of the poor's rate; for, it should be in our recollection, that to set the poor at work was one great cause which induced the legislature to institute a poor's rate: and it must be acknowledged, that this rate can be diminished by no means so proper, and beneficial to the public, as by the promotion of general industry: and we should also bear in our minds, that industrious habits grow by encouragement more thriftily than by compulsion.

Every encouragement given by agricultural societies tends to this end: rewards for good and skilful operations in husbandry, — for long and honest services, — for bringing up, without parish-affis-

tance, a family of children, — schools of industry, with prizes to the most deserving, — all tend to excite and preserve a spirit of industrious emulation, productive of the best effects; a spirit well exchanged for that idle thievish disposition, too prevalent, at present, among the rising generation of the poor.

The overseers of the poor, in their respective parishes, possess numberless opportunities of encouraging industry. The application that a poor person is obliged, by the statute, to make to them for relief, before he is authorized to be relieved by the next magistrate, gives them ample opportunities to obtain information of the industry, the economy, the earnings, the expenditure, of the person applying. When the overseers perceive one family in want of parish-relief, and the adjoining family, in a similar situation with respect to number, age, and capability of maintaining themselves, not only not in want, but possessing a visible property, they must feel that the duty of their office requires some investigation of this apparent paradox; and if, on inquiry, they find, that honest industry and rigid economy place the one family above want, and that idleness and waste reduce the other to distress; if they dole to the one necessary relief, which is more than they deserve, they should, by every encouragement, hold the other out as an example to be imitated. The natural claims of the one on society are equivocal; the merits of the other are certain.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

IT appears illiberal to refuse assent to the only reasonable excuse that can be alleged, in behalf of the poor, for the miserable degree of poverty in which they are plunged, and for the increasing burthen

burthen of expense to the public in their maintenance: an excuse which, if it existed, would throw the blame from *their* shoulders to *those* of their employers.

It would also ill become any man occupying a considerable portion of landed property, and residing in a country where the general appearance of his labouring neighbours indicates such distress as, when it meets the eye, must affect the heart, and which distress arises either from their wages not being sufficient to purchase the necessaries of life, or from a deficiency of economy and industry in the poor themselves, to deny the first cause, and assert the last to be a fact. Such conduct would be inexcusable in any man, unless, from candid investigation, he was firmly persuaded of the fact, and was conscious that such a representation was the language of truth; and, in that case, it becomes, in an inquiry of this nature, his duty to make his opinion public, and to assert, that the necessaries of life are not risen in price more than agricultural wages.

Such is the opinion that the last pages of this inquiry have attempted to establish as truth; and, if they have succeeded, the following consequence, which results from it, is apparent, and cannot be contradicted:—That economy and prudence are necessary to make what the poor earn go as far towards the support of life as possible; and industry also is necessary to make their time as productive as possible: for, if it be true that agricultural labour is as well paid, all things being considered, as it ought to be, there is no way to increase the earnings of the poor but by increasing the general quantity of industry. This is therefore the point to which our attention should be directed.

Mr. Locke's opinion has been mentioned, with respect to the relaxation of discipline among the poor. To this he attributed, in 1697, their misery and our expenses. This opinion was extracted from a collection of pamphlets concerning the poor, published at

Edinburgh in 1787, which referred to Mr. Chalmers's Estimate of the comparative State of Great Britain.

The whole of Mr. Locke's memorial, as one of the Commissioners of the Board of Trade, was not then in print; nor was any other stress laid on it than such as the opinion of a man of his abilities and solid judgement demanded: but the last edition of the pamphlet, published for the benefit, and giving an account of the institution and management, of the schools of industry in the county of Lincoln, has thrown a much stronger light on this memorial; has placed the whole of it before our view; and, by so doing, has connected the practice and experience of a most excellent regulation for the encouragement of youthful industry, with the sentiments of a vigorous and highly-cultivated mind.

This Report from the Board of Trade, drawn up by Mr. Locke, contains not *his* opinion only, but that also of *other commissioners*, founded on a full and mature examination both of facts and arguments, produced from a multiplicity of proofs which they had full power to call for. It originated at the instigation of William the Third, who had the regular employment of the poor much at heart, and mentioned the subject to his parliament, on opening the session in 1699, as a measure he very much interested himself in; and there was, accordingly, an act of parliament drawn up, that still exists, although, owing to the altercations between him and his parliament, which took place about this time, it was never passed into a law.

One capital feature in this excellent memorial is, the recommendation of schools of industry; and surely such an institution, if *ever* advisable, is *now* advisable; if it was *ever* necessary, by a regular education, to increase the honest means of maintenance among the labouring poor, it is *now* necessary; if *ever* there was reason to fear that the poor's rate may anticipate the sources of our national expenditure, we have *now* reason to fear it; and surely if

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we *ever* had cause to dread the consequences of such an anticipation to the interests of the kingdom at large, to the internal peace of its inhabitants, and to the safety of our much-admired constitution, we have *now* every reason to dread the consequences of a poor's rate, which has risen upon us in times of peace and prosperity, and which will continue to rise in a greater proportion, and with increased celerity, as war, with its concomitant evils and expenses, reduces our trade, impoverishes our manufactures, and increases the demands upon us for money, the sinews of war, in an inverse proportion with our ability to contribute it.

Fas est ab hoste doceri.—Shall we then be inattentive to the opinions of those with whom we are now at war? An opinion delivered in times of peace, and then conceived, by those who formed the first constitution after the destruction of despotism in France, as particularly applicable to the intention of instituting a poor's rate throughout that kingdom similar to that of England. Shall we pay no attention to that remarkable expression made use of by the French Committee of Mendicity which points out our poor's rate as the most destructive gangrene of our constitution? And if that man, whose effigy, in many places within the kingdom, has been burnt, a ceremony that has thrown out a blaze to the reputation of his abilities, which his intentions by no means deserve from those who are friends to the constitution of this country; if that man has ever, either in his writings or his conversation, declared his opinion, “that the present administration of our code of poor-laws will, if continued, in time effect, with certainty, that destruction of our constitution,” which himself, and other enemies to this country, have attempted to bring about in a quicker manner; if such is the opinion of Thomas Paine, shall we not be taught to strengthen ourselves in that weak part which an enemy inadvertently has pointed out; to repair that breach in our citadel; to probe and cleanse that wound which an enemy knows has been too much neglected, and now, through that neglect,

glest, threatens us with destruction? * Surely the object is of importance sufficient to demand all our attention; and the attempt of an individual to excite that attention cannot be called presumptuous, although it may be vain; cannot deserve reproof, although it may not meet with success.

Mr. Locke has reported, that, if the cause of this evil be looked into, the commissioners humbly conceive it will be found to have proceeded neither from scarcity of provisions, nor from want of employment for the poor, "since the goodness of God," he says, "has blessed these times with plenty no less than the former."

Has not the goodness of God also blessed this kingdom with plenty since the determination of the American war? If, in 1697, this was the language of truth, and the voice of gratitude, is it not so, at least in an equal degree, at present? Has not the horn of plenty been poured of late years over this country, replete with all the fruits of the earth, in every production of art and industry? Have not our ships conveyed the overflowings of Great Britain, whose consumption borders upon waste, to all parts of the globe? And have they not returned home laden with the produce

* Early in the spring of 179*, soon after the Rights of Man was published, I was invited by a gentleman, to whom I had shewn some civilities in the county, to dine with him in town. Thomas Paine was one of the company: it was my lot to be placed next to him. The company being large, the conversation soon became more divided than general, each person talking to his neighbour. Mr. Paine told me he was informed I had paid great attention to the situation of the poor in this county, and the laws respecting them, and asked me what I thought of the poor's rate. I told him I thought it an increasing evil. He then made me this reply:—"I am just returned from Thetford, where my grandfather was overseer about half a century ago. I have just seen the rates for his half-year; they were under £40.—I think he said £34.—What do you think they are now this present half-year? Sir, they are between £300 and £400. In a short time, if this evil is not stopped, the friends of liberty will, with the greatest ease, walk over the ruins of the boasted Constitution: its fall wants no acceleration from the friends of Gallic freedom."—To this a gentleman present instantly replied, "Thomas, thy wish is father to that thought,"

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of all climes? Whatever fruits the earth has produced from the north to the south, from the east to the west; whatever commodities the art and industry of all nations manufactured; have they not been imported in barter for our productions? and has not a vast balance of trade been still in our favour? Surely, then, our prosperity, in 1792, was full as remarkable as in 1697.

But let us attend to the shades of the two pictures, and consider the obscure as well as the clear. What does Mr. Locke complain of in 1697? The number of the poor, and the increase of the rate for their maintenance. — In 1697, the Board of Trade represented to the king, that the number of insolvent inhabitant houses was seven hundred and fifty thousand; which, at five inhabitants to a house, a calculation superior to what the political arithmeticians of 1690 allow, make a total of three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand poor; and that the support of all the poor must be four hundred thousand pounds yearly.*

In 1787, Mr. Howlett calculates the poor at six millions, and the return of the poor's rates amounted, on the average of three years, ending in 1785, to above two millions, and there is reason to believe that these rates are still increasing. If the management of the poor in 1697 wanted regulation, does it not in 1793?

In 1697, Mr. Locke suggested that schools of industry were the means to increase the quantity of labour throughout the kingdom, and to decrease the expense in maintaining the poor. Sir Richard Lloyd, between fifty and sixty years afterwards, started the same idea; but it remained for a part of the county of Lincoln to reduce theory to practice, in the year 1783, and to prove that those advantages, of which others had only conceived the probability, were capable, by experiment, of being proved certain. It appears that those gentlemen, who formed the plan of instituting schools of industry,

* Collection of pamphlets, concerning the poor, London and Edinburgh, 1787, p. 104. Chalmers's Estimate, p. 47.

within the district of Lindsey, in the county of Lincoln, had not, at that time, nor indeed until very lately, seen the heads of Mr. Locke's plan: other counties in the kingdom may therefore now profit by uniting Mr. Locke's theoretic regulations with the practical experience of the institution in Lincolnshire.

Nor can that experience be slightly estimated, or its good effects lightly valued, which, upon a general average of the earnings of the children, in those schools, prove clearly, that one hundred and thirty-five, between the age of eleven and twelve years, have, in ten months, taking in the depth of the five winters, ending in 1789, earned the sum of 68*ol.* 3*s.* 3*d.* or half-a-crown a week each, "exclusive of all their work, during the other ten months of each of those years; exclusive of the work of such spinners as do not feel themselves, or are not thought by their friends, forward enough to become candidates; and exclusive of those who, having their settlement in non-subscribing parishes, and being thereby deprived of any chance for these encouragements, have yet availed themselves so far of the introduction of the Jersey spinning, as to earn some part of their subsistence by their own unassisted efforts, in spite of the difficulties arising from the smallness of their cottages, &c.

"Of the two last descriptions, the number is very great, but far greater still is the multitude of those, who, by the obstinacy of parents, the neglect of overseers, or the general prejudices arising from old habits, are still trained up in sloth, vice, and misery."

The worthy and able patron of these schools, and editor of this publication, continues his exhortations to the public, in the following words:

"Would to God that the eyes of the nation could be opened upon this greatest of all evils; this fatal source of national profligacy and misfortune! — If the reader joins in this sincere and anxious wish, let him, after he has perused the following work of the great Mr. Locke, compare it with the many crude attempts that have been made, since the date of that report, to patch, to alter, or to
abrogate,

abrogate, the wise and beneficial statute of Queen Elizabeth ; and, if he shall then be of opinion, that parish-working-schools deserve a fair and full trial, let him exert his abilities and his interest, whatever they are, in procuring that trial to be sustained, by the only authority that can prevail over such obstacles, as will ever resist all private endeavours.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

OF the same opinion with this worthy magistrate is the writer of these strictures ; an opinion formed from an attention to the habits of the rising generation ; from a knowledge of the real good these schools of industry have effected, where they have been instituted ; and, from an impression, indelibly received by precept and education in early life, that *idleness is the root of all evil*, and now confirmed by observation and experience : and most earnestly does he join in this exhortation to those who have the power, that they may also have the will, to procure a trial of schools of industry, by the authority of the statute of Elizabeth, assisted by the contributions of individuals.

It is in this report of Mr. Locke's, here alluded to, that he suggests the idea of these schools of industry, and produces the following heads of regulations respecting them.

“ The children of labouring-people are an ordinary burthen to the parish, and are usually maintained in idleness ; so that their labour also is generally lost to the public, till they are twelve or fourteen years old.

“ The most effectual remedy for this, that we are able to conceive, and which we therefore humbly propose, is, that working-schools be set up in each parish, to which the children of all such

as demand relief of the parish, above three and under fourteen years of age, whilst they live at home with their parents, and are not otherwise employed for their livelihood, by the allowance of the overseers of the poor, shall be obliged to come.

“ By this means the mother will be eased of a great part of her trouble in looking after and providing for them at home, and so be at more liberty to work ; the children will be kept in much better order ; be better provided for ; and, from their infancy, be inured to work, which is of no small consequence to the making of them sober and industrious all their lives after ; and the parish will be either eased of this burthen, or at least of the misuse in the present management of it : for a great number of children giving a poor man a title to an allowance from the parish, this allowance is given once a week, or once a month, to the father, in money ; which he, not seldom, spends on himself at the ale-house, whilst his children (for whose sake he had it) are left to suffer, or perish under the want of necessaries, unless the charity of neighbours relieve them.

“ We humbly conceive, that a man and his wife, in health, may be able, by their ordinary labour, to maintain themselves and two children : more than two children at one time, under the age of three years, will seldom happen in one family ; if, therefore, all the children, above three years old, be taken off their hands, those who have never so many, whilst they remain themselves in health, will not need any allowance for them.

“ We do not suppose that children at three years old will be able, at that age, to get their livelihoods at the working-school ; but we are sure, that what is necessary for their relief will more effectually have that use, if it be distributed to them in bread at that school, than if it be given to their fathers in money. What they have at home from their parents is seldom more than bread and water, and that, many of them, very scantily too ; if, therefore, care be taken that they have each of them their belly-full of bread daily at school, they

they will be in no danger of famishing; but, on the contrary, they will be healthier and stronger than those who are bred otherwise. Nor will this practice cost the overseer any trouble; for a baker may be agreed with to furnish and bring into the school-house, every day, the allowance of bread necessary for all the scholars that are there. And to this may be added also, without any trouble, in cold weather, if it be thought needful, a little warm water-gruel; for the same fire that warms the room may be made use of to boil a pot of it.

“ From this method the children will not only reap the fore-mentioned advantages, with far less charge to the parish than what is now done for them, but they will be also thereby the more obliged to come to school and apply themselves to work, because otherwise they will have no victuals: and also the benefit thereby, both to themselves and the parish, will daily increase; for the earnings of their labour at school every day increasing, it may reasonably be concluded that, computing all the earnings of a child, from three to fourteen years of age, the nourishment and teaching of such a child, during that whole time, will cost the parish nothing: whereas there is no child now, which, from its birth, is maintained by the parish, but, before the age of fourteen, costs the parish fifty or sixty pounds.

Another advantage also of bringing poor children thus to a working-school is, that by this means they may be obliged to come constantly to church every Sunday along with their school-masters or dames, whereby they may be brought into some sense of religion; whereas ordinarily now, in their loose and idle way of breeding up, they are as utter strangers both to religion and morality, as they are to industry.

“ In order, therefore, to the more effectually carrying on of this work to the advantage of this kingdom, we further humbly propose, that these schools be generally for spinning or knitting, or some other part of the woollen-manufacture, unless in countries

where the place shall furnish some other materials fitter for the employment of such poor children ; in which places the choice of those materials, for their employment, may be left to the prudence and direction of the guardians of the poor of that hundred ; and that the teachers, in these schools, be paid out of the poor-rates, as can be agreed.

“ This, though at first setting up it may cost the parish a little, yet we humbly conceive, that (the earnings of the children abating the charge of their maintenance, and as much work being required of each of them as they are reasonably to perform) it will quickly pay its own charges with an overplus.

“ That, where the number of the poor children of any parish is greater than for them all to be employed in one school, they be there divided into two ; and the boys and girls, if thought convenient, taught and kept to work separately.

“ That the handicraftsmen, in each hundred, be bound to take every other of their respective apprentices from amongst the boys in some one of the schools in the said hundred, without any money : which boys they may so take, at what age they please, to be bound to them till the age of twenty-three years, that so the length of time may more than make amends for the usual sums that are given to handicraftsmen with such apprentices.

“ That those also in the hundred who keep in their hands land of their own to the value of 25*l.* per annum, or upwards, or who rent 50*l.* per annum, or upwards, may choose, out of the schools of the said hundred, what boy each of them pleases, to be his apprentice in husbandry, upon the same condition.

“ That whatever boys are not, by this means, bound out apprentices before they are full fourteen, shall, at the Easter-meeting of the *guardians of each hundred* every year, be bound to such gentlemen, yeomen, or farmers, within the said hundred, as have the greatest number of acres of land in their hands, who shall be obliged to take them for their apprentices till the age of twenty-three,

three, or bind them out, at their own cost, to some handicraftsmen; provided always, that no such gentleman, yeoman, or farmer, shall be bound to have two such apprentices at a time.

“ That grown people, also, (to take away their pretence of want of work,) may come to the said working-schools to learn, where work shall accordingly be provided for them.

“ That the materials to be employed in these schools, and among other the poor people of the parish, be provided by a common stock in each hundred, to be raised out of a certain portion of the poor’s rate of each parish as requisite; which stock, we humbly conceive, need be raised but once; for, if rightly managed, it will increase.”

The expression, *guardians of the hundred*, refers to a part of Mr. Locke’s general plan, which is not necessarily connected with schools of industry: but it would not be difficult to put in practice this regulation, with respect to binding the children apprentice at a proper age, without an appointment of guardians of hundreds. The last clause proceeds on the idea, that the application of the poor’s rate to this purpose, or as much of it as is necessary, is a legal application of the parish-money; and that it is so is certain, as appears by the following extract from the 43d of Elizabeth:

“ The overseers, or the greatest part of them, shall take order, from time to time, by and with the consent of two or more such justices of the peace, as is aforesaid, for setting to work the children of such whose parents shall not, by the said church-wardens and overseers, or the greater part of them, be thought able to keep and maintain their children.” Sect. 1.

“ And also to raise weekly, or otherwise, &c. a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other necessary stuff, to set the poor at work.” Sect. 1.

The first step towards the establishment of schools of industry should therefore originate from the authority of the magistrates; and

and the quarter-sessions might, with great propriety, promote the undertaking, by orders to the following purport :

1. The overseers of every parish are, by order of sessions, required, by virtue of the act of parliament passed in the 43d year of Queen Elizabeth, chapter the second, and in obedience thereto, to purchase stock and materials, and to provide proper places and proper instructions to teach the children to knit and spin of all such whose parents shall not be thought able to keep and maintain their children.

2. They are also required not to grant any relief in money to such parents who shall refuse to send their children, between the age of three years and nine, to the places appointed them for their instruction, and suffer them to continue there as many hours each day, as, by the said overseers, shall be thought fit and proper, and not to cease their attendance until discharged from the said schools with consent of the overseers.

3. That these orders be printed, and copies of them dispersed in all parishes throughout the district.

Orders of sessions similar to these were issued by the quarter-sessions at Louth, in Lincolnshire, in 1783, which were followed by proposals for the encouragement of the working-poor within those districts, throughout which schools of industry have been instituted.

The following are the proposals for an annual subscription for the working-poor, within certain districts in the county of Lincoln, which laid the foundations of the schools of industry in that county :

1. That every parish, within the district above-mentioned, be requested to subscribe a sum amounting to the proportion of 1 per cent. upon the poor's rates of the last year.

2. That individuals, within the said district, be solicited to subscribe the sum of five shillings each annually.

3. That

3. That a meeting of the subscribers be called as soon as conveniently may be, to choose a committee for the management of the business of the subscription.

4. That premiums be given from the said subscription to such children, of certain ages and descriptions, within the said district, as in a given time shall have produced the greatest quantity of work, of different kinds, and of the best quality.

5. That these premiums shall consist in different articles of clothing, and the highest premium in complete clothing. The said clothing to be made handsome and uniform.

6. That, whenever any young person shall go out to apprenticeship or service, or be married, with the approbation of the committee, such young person shall receive from the committee a reward not less than five pounds, nor exceeding ten pounds, if he or she shall, in the course of his or her education, have received three or more of the annual premiums given by the committee. A reward not less than two pounds, and not exceeding three pounds, if he or she shall have received two of the said premiums. And a reward not less than one pound ten shillings, nor exceeding two pounds, if he or she shall have received one of the said annual premiums. If the subscriptions shall not be found sufficient for the above rewards, then the value of each to be lessened in proportion to the state of the subscription.

7. That premiums be also given, at the discretion of the committee, to such overseers of the poor as shall distinguish themselves in the due execution of the orders of last quarter-sessions, relative to the employment of the poor.

8. That the fixing the number of annual premiums, and the value of each, shall be left to the discretion of the committee.

It should be observed, that, in those parts of Lincolnshire where these schools have been established, the working-poor had not been accustomed to any manufactory; and, except the labour that agriculture demanded, which (in a country where the tract of land, cultivated

cultivated by the plough, being small in proportion to that used for grazing) could not be sufficient, at all times of the year, to find employment for their husbandmen; the poor, consequently, were not trained to regular habits of industry; the women and children especially had no means of increasing the income of their family, had they, in fact, been possessed of the will, which, unfortunately, they were not; but, on the contrary, the parents of children who were at these schools made use of every means in their power to stifle, in the cradle, an institution which had youthful industry for its object; although the fruits of that industry were an increase of income to themselves, clothing to their children, regular manners, moral habits, honorary rewards, good characters, and a prospect of more material advantages in future. To such a degree of inveteracy was the opposition of the poor to this excellent institution arrived, that many parents have been known to beat and otherwise ill-treat their children, for having deserved and received rewards from those appointed to distribute the prizes.

The habits of the working-poor, in Suffolk and Essex, are materially different, as it is to be hoped they also are in most counties in England; the manufactures which have been established among us, in this part of the kingdom, for several centuries, have been carried on with such reputation and success, as to give names, from the towns in which they are made, to several kinds of highly valuable cloths, by which names they are known in the most distant countries on the globe: at the same time they have raised many worthy families to opulence and respect; and, although it must be allowed, that the poor's rates have not always diminished in proportion as the manufactures have been successful, and have generally increased as the demand for goods decreased; yet, as the poor have been exercised in habits of industry, there is no fear that prejudices, similar to those in Lincolnshire, should prevail here: the temptation held forth to the children to be industrious, by rewards, public exhibitions, and showy processions, which so considerably

siderably increased the expenses of the institutions in Lincolnshire, will not be so necessary with us, nor in general throughout the kingdom; consequently a smaller subscription, and less encouragement from the pockets of individuals, will insure success in other counties, than was found necessary in Lincolnshire; and probably an application of a proportion of the poor's rate may no longer be necessary, than what is warranted by the letter and spirit of the clause in the forty-third of Elizabeth, authorizing the overseers to take order for setting the children of the poor to work, and to raise weekly, or otherwise by taxation, &c. a convenient stock of hemp, wool, flax, &c. for that purpose.

But some subscription, similar to that proposed and carried into execution in Lincolnshire, is certainly necessary, to provide a salary for instructors, and also prizes for the most deserving. The working-rooms, the materials to manufacture, and the utensils for the purpose, may undoubtedly be purchased by the poor's rate; but no act of parliament authorizes the overseers to raise a sum to reward and encourage the poor, to incite them to industry, and to stir up a spirit of emulation among that most numerous class of our fellow-subjects, in the most laudable exertions which can occupy the hours of human life.

There is no doubt but that the inhabitants in every county in the kingdom, by a laudable patriotic spirit, which is constantly manifesting itself in so many splendid instances, to the honour of the country and of the age, would be induced to stand forward with a subscription to this purpose, were they impressed with a conviction of the expediency, the utility, and practicability, of the measure: to attempt such an impression shall be the aim of the next Letter on this subject.

L E T T E R XXXV.

NO reliance shall be placed on a train of inferences, which might, in this case, follow each other with all the authority of self-evident propositions; we will not at present rely on those deductions, which plain reason and common sense must make from so universally acknowledged a principle, as that the riches of a nation are in proportion to its industry, and its industry depends on the habits imbibed by its young people; but we will, for a time, suppose, that it is become the business of the writer to weaken and diminish, in the mind of his readers, their respect for and reliance on those arguments in favour of schools of industry, which he is not able to confute.

The propriety of the plan shall first be supposed to be attacked on this ground; that, allowing it to be no *illegal* appropriation of part of the poor's rates, to apply a small sum towards raising a stock for poor children to work out, and to teach them to earn a livelihood; yet it would be improper, because common experience, as instanced by the returns of the overseers in the three years ending in 1785, has proved, that it has been their general practice to apply a very small portion of the poor's rate in the purchase of stock for the poor to work up; not above a hundred and thirty-third part of the total raised, or about fifteen thousand pounds of the whole sum; and that this has been principally for the use of *grown people*, who are less likely to waste and spoil the stock than *children*.

That, where the wants of the poor are so pressing, as to occasion the sum raised for their relief to be inadequate to the purpose, the appropriating a larger portion to a precarious advantage would be improper.

That the attempt, to raise a sum by a general voluntary subscription, would, if it succeeded, have the effect of an additional rate:
if

if it did not succeed, the money applied from the poor's rate would be thrown away by the failure of the plan; therefore, in both cases, the attempt is improper.

That the same objections, which apply to the propriety of the plan, would equally apply to its expediency; and there are several other observations which may be brought to prove it not expedient.

The only means of employing the children, and the only kind of handicraft they are intended to learn, is knitting and spinning; these employments, however proper for girls, cannot be thought so for boys; a more active habit being necessary to bring up men to a life of agricultural labour, than the almost sedentary employment of the wheel; and it has been experienced, that habits of life, obtained by confinement, unnerve the man, and render him less fit for those occupations for which the poor should be educated: for instance, a tailor or shoemaker seldom becomes active and laborious, even though he may be industrious; the soldiers and sailors, that come from the spinning-wheel or the loom, are not so likely to be equal to a discharge of their military duties, and to the hardships of their profession, as those from the plough or the saw; nor is a spinning-school so likely to teach boys to go aloft as the mason's scaffold.

Besides, what will be done with the produce of the schools of industry? where will you find a sale for the yarn and the stockings? and, unless a market can be found, we shall lose both stock and block; and shall consequently expend no inconsiderable portion of the poor's rate, in teaching our poor children an art, which neither ourselves can, at present, or they, in future, turn to a profitable account.

The schools which are alluded to, as having been established in Lincolnshire, have an advantage over similar schools of spinning and knitting, in most other counties: they were established for the express purpose of encouraging a manufacture, for which the *long wool of Lincolnshire* is particularly proper; the sale of the staple-

commodity of their county was the principal object that the promoters of these schools had in view :—in other counties, if Jersey or worsted spinning is to be the employment, the manufacture of the staple-commodity of two or three counties alone will be the object ; and, in proportion as the distance increases, where these schools are encouraged, from the counties where the long wool is produced, in the same proportion will the expense of the carriage of the raw commodity be increased ; and, as the distance increases from the northern counties, so will the price upon the spot, of the yarn manufactured, decrease.

How, and where, can teachers be procured in every village ? The expense will be too great, where the number of the scholars is small ; and, where large, not only teachers will be wanting, but school-rooms, which will add very considerably to the expense.

These, very probably, are the principal reasons that may be alleged against this institution ; as these appear at first sight sufficient to raise a doubt in the minds of those, whose encouragement would be necessary, not only in word but deed ; whose good report of the measure is not the only act required in its favour, but whose activity and supervision are wanted, after their liberality has been experienced by a public subscription : it is therefore proper not to rely on the effect of panegyric only ; but to obviate these objections, which may appear to some of considerable importance.

With respect to the first objection, it shall be answered ; that a vicious or bad practice should be abolished, and that the universality of it ought by no means to be produced as an argument in its favour, but as a proof to the contrary ; if an individual parish loses ten pounds a year, because the overseers do not provide a stock for the poor to work up, as, by the statute of Elizabeth, it is their duty to do, such conduct of the officers is blameable and detrimental to that parish ; and it will not become less so if a similar conduct prevails in ten thousand parishes ; but, on the contrary, the loss will be co-extensive with the universality of the neglect, and the bad

bad effect of such conduct will prove itself by the sum-total of the loss.

Now, let us reverse the object, and suppose an opposite cause producing an effect diametrically opposite: if ten pounds per annum would be the gains of a single parish, from the employment of children, two hundred thousand pounds would be the profit, if the practice were universal.

But let us see the good consequence in the light of habit only; and let us consider youthful industry as being calculated, by raising an industrious generation, to increase the wealth of the kingdom, which must bear a proportion with the work done within it. We will take it for granted that this fifteen thousand pounds, which has been returned to the committee of the House of Commons as the sum expended in providing materials and utensils for setting the poor to work throughout England and Wales, could have been only sufficient to provide work for the impotent and aged poor, and a few children in the work-houses, what would, by this time, have been the happy effect throughout the kingdom, if twenty times that sum had been employed in teaching, and setting to work, all the children of the poor through the three years when this average was taken, even if no profit had arisen from the work itself?

Those happy effects are beyond our calculation: we can only have a faint notion of them, by forming an idea of the reverse of their present miserable situation; by placing before our eyes the happy prospect an industrious generation forms, when placed in contrast with an idle race of people: we should see cleanliness instead of filth, clothing instead of nakedness, comfort and content instead of misery and dissatisfaction.

This advantage is not precarious, but certain, independent of immediate profit from the materials worked up. Supposing no market for their yarn, no sale for their stockings; even supposing the loss of materials and of time certain; the habits of industry

try obtained, alone, would be worth ten times the amount of the whole expence.

But there is no reason to suppose the produce of youthful ingenuity unsaleable or unprofitable : has it been so in Lincolnshire? If not, why must it be so in Suffolk, in Essex, or in any other county? That yarn which is fit for market may have a longer carriage upon it, if no sale can be found at home, it is true : it certainly is farther from Suffolk and Essex to Yorkshire, than from Lincolnshire : but why must the schools of industry in these counties be employed only in spinning of Jersey? Why could not they be employed about such yarn as would find a market with the neighbouring manufacturers? If it be answered, that the neighbouring manufacturers do not keep the *parents* in constant work, and consequently the *children's yarn* would not find a sale, the difficulty is easily removed : let it be proposed to increase the consumption of coarse woollen cloths, by clothing our numerous poor in warm and comfortable apparel, manufactured by their own children. We are constrained, by act of parliament, for the encouragement of the woollen-manufacture, to bury people of all ranks and conditions in a shroud made of sheep's wool only. Why should not our poor (all those who are in such a situation of life as to be relieved by the poor's rate) be clothed by the manufactory arising from the ingenuity and industry of their children? This would be a real encouragement of youthful industry. The obligation, when once become the law of the land, would, it is believed, by general consent, become the practice: and this, at least, is certain, that the poor would experience the comforts of such clothing; they would experience, also, other great benefits, arising from the habit of industry, imbibed by their young family.

L E T T E R XXXVI.

WITH respect to the impropriety of employing any part of the poor's rates, in a plan, the success of which may be doubtful, and of collecting, from the pockets of the benevolent and charitable, a kind of additional poor's rate, the answer is obvious: — the benevolent and charitable may be disappointed, if the plan should not be successful, but will receive an equivalent for their money subscribed in their intention to do good: and, if the plan succeeds, the good effect itself will insure a cheerful continuance of their subscription: in the mean time, a portion of the poor's rate will be applied according to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law: and, should it fail of the success expected, one truth will be established; a melancholy one indeed, but such as we ought not to be ignorant of, if it be a truth: — that youthful industry cannot be made productive of advantage to society, except in the *habit itself*, which will not leave them in maturer life, when it *will be of service*; and, in that case, we have gained the habit of industry in return for the expense.

But the employment, being confined to spinning and knitting, has been stated as an objection. Let us suppose these to be the sole employments; although, if the plan succeeds, and their work is profitable, other handicrafts might be introduced: the objection may be answered in the words of that gentleman* to whom the county of Lincoln has been so much obliged for these institutions.

* See an Account of the Society for the Promotion of Industry in Lincolnshire, by the Rev. R. G. Bower, one of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county of Lincoln.

“ Now

“ Now I would ask, which parishes will hereafter stock the country with the most laborious, honest, and intelligent, servants or labourers? Will they be those where children, until they become thirteen or fourteen years old, *at least*, continue to be nurtured in idleness (whether at the public expense or that of their parents); where they see nothing but patterns of dissoluteness and immorality; hear nothing but oaths, blasphemies, and slander; learn nothing but to plunder hen-roosts, orchards, and hedges; and, for these and similar purposes, keep the most irregular hours, and are accustomed to prowl about at night like so many beasts of prey? It is said, *the children, under the care recommended above, will, at thirteen or fourteen years of age, know nothing but spinning.* Yes, they will know much more; unless regularity of hours, decency of behaviour, a habit of persevering industry, and a sense of duty to God and man, with the means of perpetuating it, are nothing. But will such objectors lay their hands on their hearts, and say, that *one in twenty* of the pauper’s children, at present, when thirteen or fourteen years old, knows *any thing at all*, unless it be some of the wicked accomplishments above alluded to? If they *do not*, it is mere cavilling, and not worth a serious answer, to say, that we must not teach them what we propose, only because it is not, perhaps, in our power to teach them more; at least, not without such funds as we can have no reason to expect. Would not, then, any considerate man, about to hire a lad or a girl of the age above-mentioned, give a decided preference to those who shall have been educated in a parish, where, in conformity to the plans of our society, children from five or six years of age are assembled, under the same roof, at an early and regular hour of the morning; kept steadily to the pursuit of business; taught that, even so early in life, they are *able to maintain themselves*; made to take a pride in nothing but what they obtain by merit; and to dispute about no other object, than who, by being forwardest in the performance of
duty,

duty, shall be entitled to the highest of those rewards which the liberality of the society of industry shall, from time to time, hold up to their view?

“ Can it be supposed that such an education will make no difference either in the morality of the country or the incumbrance of parishes? Will all this care and trouble be thrown away upon them? Will they remember none of the good lessons they have heard and will hear? Will they at once cast off all the regularity they shall have been inured to, during those six or seven years of human life, wherein habits, either good or bad, are easiest planted, and take the deepest root? Will they be as much inclined to picking and stealing as if they had never tasted the sweet produce of honest labour? Will they, exclusive of principle, be as *dexterous* in the trade of iniquity as if they had never been exercised at any other? Will they, when decorated with the honourable marks of our society's approbation, care as little about *their character, thus established*, as those who never knew how great a treasure a good name is? Lastly, will they easily be induced to raise a clamorous tongue, or extend an idle hand, for parish-relief, at thirty or forty years of age, when they were taught to scorn it at nine or ten?”

As to the want of activity in the employment, if the knitting-pin is to be handled, or the spinning-wheel is to be turned, the observation is futile. The chief time of girls and boys, in all schools, is passed in a sedentary posture; but they have their hours of relaxation, during which they unbend their minds, and train, by youthful sports, the body to exercise and health. Have not all our large schools produced excellent soldiers and sailors? Where can we, with reason, expect our commanders by sea and land to be educated, if not in those seminaries, where the improvement of the mind confines them many hours in the day to a sedentary posture, pleasureably exchanged, in the hours of relaxation, for the native vigorous sports of youth?

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race,
Disporting on thy margent green,
The paths of pleasure trace.

But, allowing it to be expedient that the rising generation of the poor ought to be brought up in more active employments than the knitting-needle or the wheel only, might they not intermix the labours of the field with the employments of manufacture? If stones are to be picked for the surveyor, wheat to be drilled, pulse to be hoed, corn to be weeded, grafs to be made into hay, wheat to be reaped, and all other various employments of husbandry to be learned, could not the superintendant of the schools go with his pupils into the fields, and see that they do their work properly? Very little instruction would be necessary; the only object would be to keep up the habit of industry, which might be effected with as much ease in a field as in a room.

With respect to the difficulty of finding teachers for every village, and a salary to pay them, it is apprehended that any village, producing twenty male and female scholars, will find it the best economy to pay a person such a salary as will be worth the acceptance to keep these young people in habits of industry, and to instruct them in the use of those very common instruments, the knitting-pin and the wheel: the farmer who employs them will find it worth his while that they should not remain ignorant of the mode of performing operations in agriculture, when they can be of service in that line.

Where the number of scholars is small, one school-room would be sufficient, which might be easily found in any village; and, where the number is large, it is better to have different rooms than to crowd many in one, both in regard to health and to convenience: the same teacher could superintend two rooms, half-a-mile from each

each other, with equal, if not greater, convenience, than if the whole number of scholars were in one.

It would be premature to offer, at this time, any specific plan for the establishment of these schools, either throughout the kingdom at large, or in that small proportion of it to which these letters are more particularly addressed; it may, nevertheless, be proper to observe, that Mr. Locke's theory, united with the experiments already made in the county of Lincoln, would together form a good outline, which might be filled up according to the disposition and situation of the inhabitants in any village, or town, which might choose to make the experiment, and in which the local convenience of the particular places might be consulted and attended to.

In an excursion which I made into Lincolnshire, in the summer of 1787, to view the state of agriculture in that county, and also to inspect the regulation, and to be able to form some idea of the use, of these institutions, some notes of which journey are in the eighth volume of the Annals of Agriculture, I became acquainted with a gentleman who took an active part, as a trustee, in the direction of them; and, wishing to introduce a similar institution in Suffolk, I wrote to him requesting some information as to some particular points which were stated to him. I cannot conceive this gentleman will be offended with me for making public so much of his answer as respected this subject of our correspondence, it reflecting much credit on himself for the obliging and instructive manner in which he gives his information. A copy of that part of his letter shall, therefore, be subjoined, as it will point out the means the gentlemen in the southern district of the parts of Lindsey, where these schools were first established, took to insure success in their attempt.

Dec. 8, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

—— “ It was entirely through the recommendation of the quarter-sessions, held at Louth, that the poor were set to spinning through this part of the county of Lincoln; and by the great assiduity, &c. of our worthy magistrate, Mr. Bowyer, the plan has been carried so very far into execution. The materials were at first procured by the overseers of the poor of each parish, and the wheels and reels, &c. bought by them, at the parish's expense; and, as soon as the children can spin tolerably well, the wool-comber delivers out the wool to the spinners, and pays them for the spinning per pound, and overhanks; and the children earn soon from 18*d.* to 3*s.* per week, from seven years old.

“ The children in schools were and are taught by a woman procured for that purpose, at the expense of the parish at first, but are afterwards paid out of the earnings of the children so taught, in proportion to their earnings; and deductions are also made for fire and candle.

“ Before any school-rooms were built, the children were taught in some convenient room in each parish, or in some old uninhabited house, as best suited. The school-hours are generally from six in the morning, in summer, until six or seven in the evening; and, in winter, from seven in the morning till seven or eight at night.

“ No school-rooms have been built so large as to contain a hundred children; nor do we think it would be eligible to have them so large as to contain so many; but, on the contrary, we think the best size are those which will *properly* hold about twenty wheels, or fewer, according to the children in each parish; and, where there is a great number of children, *I think* different schools should be erected in such parts of the parish as may best suit the convenience of the children coming to and going from school; which schools may be built of slight and cheap materials; but *that* as parishes choose;

choofe; for fome have been made for the purpofe *alfo* of the teacher's refiding in. A fchool for twenty fhould be 36 feet long by 15 or 16 feet wide, with windows on *both* fides, as may be beft for light; and, for warmth, we ufe ftoves generally, which are not expenfive at *the firft*, and fave a great deal in coals, &c.

“ The teachers are *always* fuch as can teach the children to read, one hour *at the leaft* each day, and take good care of their morals; and alfo instruct them how to behave themfelves to *all forts* of people, as far as in their power.

“ Where Sunday-fchools are already eftablifhed, the children are attended *generally* by the teacher, and others appointed.”

Such an institution would, wherever it is carried into effect, tend to every defirable confequence, as well with refpect to the pecuniary interefts of the occupiers in the place, by diminifhing the poor's rates, as to the comfort of the poor themfelves, by introducing among their children regular habits of induftry and orderly behaviour, and would, confequently, tend to the happinefs of thofe alfo, who, although elevated above the apprehenfion of poverty, are not above the feelings of humanity, and therefore muft lament thofe diftreffes of their neighbours, which they cannot help feeing, and are not able to remove. Next to the defire of poffeffing a competency ourfelves, it is a natural wifh, that all thofe with whom we are connected, by any intercourfe of vicinity or employment, fhould alfo betray no figns of mifery or diftreff, arifing from poverty. The vifions of the philofopher or poet, who fancies happinefs lies in rural independence, can never be realized in fituations where much is feen, heard, or felt, of his neighbour's mifery; nor can a well-difpofed mind tafte *the fweet oblivion of the cares of life*, while in the midft of fcenes of diftreff.

Some men of tafte have fuppofed, that, in a landfcape, the pleafing effect upon the mind, of fmoke arifing from the chimney of a neat cottager, flows from a felfifh comparifon of one's own fituation with that of the cottager: — it is pleafant *procul alterius fpectare*

spectare laborem: — but they must excuse me if I differ with them in opinion; it is a matter of feeling only, the cottage-smoke awakens an idea of comfort; the imagination rushes to the chimney-corner, and sees honest labour recompensed by its proper rewards; and the pleasure which is then tasted is of a purer nature; it is pleasant *propè alterius spectare solamen*: — but if the hideous appearance of misery and distress, arising from chilling poverty, mixes with the idea, every pleasing effect is instantly changed to its opposite; and we turn with anguish from those objects which recal to the mind scenes of misery we are not able to relieve.

Those, who are advocates for, or patrons of, Sunday-schools, would be more certain of their good effect, and the cause of religion and morality would receive a greater advantage from their very laudable endeavours, were the foundation of those schools to be laid in schools of industry: a superstructure of religious sentiment would be substantially built on the solid foundation of habitual industry. A poor man *cannot be religious who is not industrious*; because, having no property himself, he cannot honestly command the comforts, or even the necessaries, of life, but by industry: every church-going habit in that class of society, not accompanied by habitual industry, is hypocritical; because honesty cannot be the moral sentiment which influences the habit.

That the poor should be instructed in their duties of religion is certainly necessary; but we should remember that those are divided into two heads, our duty towards God and towards our neighbour; the one cannot be discharged without the other; that industry, which is a necessary duty towards your neighbour, is equally necessary to render your religious duties towards God acceptable.

But the art of writing is not necessary to a performance of the duties of the poor, either towards God or towards their neighbour, and it may lead towards a breach of their duty towards *both*: there must be in society hewers of wood and drawers of water; if all are good penmen, where are those to be found who will contentedly perform

perform the laborious offices of society, and live through a life of toil? If honesty be not a fixed principle of the mind, the acquisition of writing may offer a temptation that will lead to ruin.

Reading may be considered nearly in the same point of light. If we could confine the poor boy to reading his Prayer-book and his Testament only, nothing but good would arise from teaching poor children to read; but, the art being acquired, can we be sure whether the use of it may lead? To prognosticate; let us only recollect what books ourselves, when boys, would read with the greatest avidity; and, before we have reason to deplore the consequence of bringing the poor up, in such a manner, as may make them less satisfied with their humble and laborious station in life, let us, in idea, anticipate the probable misuse of these qualifications, and, by a kind of prophetic foresight, be certain of the effect, before we, by encouragement, foster the cause.

While these doubts are thrown out, with respect to the expediency of so much of the institution of Sunday-schools, as respects the teaching *all* the children of the poor to read and write; an implicit confidence in the good intention of the patrons of them should be explicitly declared, coupled with this suggestion; that, probably, the only proper foundation of a Sunday-school is upon a school of daily industry.

So thought the patrons of the schools in Lincolnshire, and such has been their practice; the respectable magistrate, to whom that county has been, and it is hoped all England will be, obliged, for his excellent exemplification of the experiment, as well as for his perspicuous and well-written recommendation of the institution, and the detail of its success in that county, has finished the plan in a most complete manner, by a Sunday-school; and, in so doing, has set us a noble example of training youth in the habit of industry the six days, and in the duties of religion the seventh.

L E T T E R XXXVII.

I HAVE, in pursuance of my plan, now sent you a few pages on ale-houses and their customers; tracing the rise and progress of the baneful and seducing habit of drinking strong liquors, from the earliest days, in this island, to the present æra; when the revenue receives above five millions annually from the inhabitants of the southern part of Great Britain, by their indulging themselves in this practice.

Julius Cæsar, in describing the manners and customs of the inhabitants of England, at the time of his invasion, about 77 years before the Christian epoch, says, that those were the most civilized who inhabited Kent, and that they differed but little from the Gauls; that those, who lived in the interior parts, sowed but little corn, and lived on milk and flesh.

In describing the inhabitants of Gaul, he says nearly the same of them, “ *Agriculturæ non student; majorque pars victus eorum in lacte et caseo et carne consistit.*”

Solinus, who wrote about eighty years after the birth of Christ, says, that the Britons drank a fermented liquor, made of barley, unknown in former ages, or in any other country in Europe.

Tacitus, who wrote about thirty years afterwards, speaks strongly of the drunken habits of the Germans, near neighbours to the Gauls; “ *Diem noctemque continuare potando, nulli probrum;*” he also says, that they made use of a liquor from barley, or wheat, fermented.

We must conceive, that Cæsar was either a very superficial observer of the habits of those people, into whose country he carried fire and sword; or that, in a few years, habits, destructive of their health and morals, were introduced among them by their conquerors,

querors, and had struck such a root, as to have very soon become a national vice.

The attachment of savages to strong liquors is a well-known fact; the excess in which they indulge themselves with ardent spirits, whenever they can get at them, and the inveteracy of the habit, when once indulged in, almost tend to prove, analogically, that fermented liquors were not known, in Gaul and Britain, in the days of Cæsar, although, about a hundred years afterwards, the drinking them to excess was become a confirmed habit to the Germans, when Tacitus wrote his terse and elegant dissertation on their manners.

In the first century of the Christian æra, the Britons used a fermented liquor from barley: in the latter end of the 18th century, the public revenue arising from the duties on liquors, principally made from barley, and most in use with the common people, exceed five millions sterling a year.

The habit is become of too strong a growth, is too general, and too inveterate, to be eradicated; and, were it not, the financier of the day would discourage the attempt; he would tell us, we should act as unskilful gardeners, plucking up valuable plants with the weeds; if drunkenness disappeared from the land, a considerable part of five millions sterling would disappear from the coffers of the Exchequer; and, in proportion as we restrain the habit, we diminish the revenue arising from it.

But, however impolitic the eradication of drunkenness may be, when seen in the light of revenue, were it possible to effect it, there can no harm arise, either to our finances or our morals, in tracing as well as the very few lights, which can be found on this subject, will permit us, the habit of English drunkenness, from its infancy to its maturity: it will be the history of ale-houses; will be found to grow with their growth, and to increase with their number; and it is possible that, in the progress of the investigation, one great and operative cause of the expense in maintaining our poor, and

the miserable poverty they sustain, may appear too plainly to be mistaken; and, having found out the cause of a disease, he is a timid physician who does not prescribe the remedy.

A fermented liquor from barley was the first intoxicating drink we read of in use among the Britons; but probably hydromel, or honey mixed with water and fermented, was nearly a cotemporary indulgence; when the aborigines of the island, to avoid the tyranny of the Romans, withdrew to their mountains and *morasses*, we find that they carried with them the knowledge and use of the one, if not of the other; the first they called *cwrw*, which is the Welch name for ale at present.

The vice of drunkenness does not seem to have been general until the Danes and Saxons came among us; and they brought not only the vice, but also the names of the liquors which were in most general use among them, mead and ale, and which have preserved the same appellations to the present times.

Mr. Strutt, in his history of the ancient Britons and Saxons, tells us, that intemperance in drinking was a prevailing vice, both among the Anglo-Saxons and Danes, with people of all ranks, in which they often spent whole days and nights without intermission; all meetings, public and private, terminated in rioting and excessive drinking, not excepting religious festivals; at which times it was usual for them to drink large draughts, in honour of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Twelve Apostles, and other venerated saints. In the reign of Edgar the Peaceable, the vice of immoderate drinking prevailed so greatly, that laws were thought necessary to reform it; and that prince, to prevent quarrels that arose in public-houses, from any one's drinking more than his share, which it seems was very frequent; caused certain pegs or knobs to be put, at proper distances, into each drinking-cup; and no man was to drink beyond those knobs at one draught, under a severe penalty; which was also to be inflicted upon those who would compel others to
drink

drink beyond them : he quotes William of Malmſbury, and Bartholinus, as his authorities.

But it cannot be ſuppoſed, that, by the expreſſion *public-houſes*, ſimilar places of entertainment to thoſe which now bear that general appellation can be intended ; becauſe we find, that above a century after the concluſion of the Saxon monarchy, by the death of Edward the Confefſor, public-houſes were not known, even in the metropolis : Fitzſtephen's Deſcription of the City of London, which is ſuppoſed to be written in 1174, mentioning the cuſtom of ſelling wines by retail, in *ſhips* and *vaults* ; and that there was only one public eating-houſe, or cook-ſhop : — “ *Præterea eſt in Lundenia ſuper ripam fluminis, inter vina in navibus et cellariis venalia, publica Coquina.*”

About ninety-two years afterwards, appears the firſt inſtance of the attention of the legiſlature to our favourite beverage, ale ; in a ſtatute paſſed in the 51ſt year of the reign of Henry the Third, called *Aſſiſa Panis et Cereviſæ*. As much of the ſtatute as relates to *cereviſa*, or ale, follows in theſe words :

“ When a quarter of wheat is ſold for three ſhillings or three ſhillings and four-pence, and a quarter of barley for twenty-pence or two ſhillings, and a quarter of oats for ſixteen-pence, then brewers in cities ought, and may well afford, to ſell two gallons of beer, or ale, for a penny ; and, out of cities, to ſell three or four gallons for a penny ; and, when in a town, three gallons are ſold for a penny ; out of a town, they ought, and may, ſell four ; and this aſſize ought to be holden throughout all England.”

But by ſtatute the ſixth of the ſame year, called the Statute of the Pillorie and Tumbril, it is enacted, — “ That, when a quarter of barley is ſold for two ſhillings, then four quarts of ale ſhall be ſold for a penny ; when for two ſhillings and ſix-pence, then ſeven quarts for two-pence ; when for three ſhillings, then three quarts for one penny ; when for three ſhillings and ſix-pence, then five quarts for two-pence ; when it is ſold for four ſhillings, then two quarts

at one penny ; and so, from henceforth, the prices shall increase and decrease after the rate of six-pence."

Mr. Barrington, in his notes on these statutes, seems to be of opinion, that women, at this time, principally carried on this trade ; and corroborates that opinion by the term *brachiatrice* being used : and also on the authority of Harrison, who, in his description of Britain in Queen Elizabeth's reign, speaks of *ale-wives* using deceits in brewing ; and also because it is still said in Wales, that no one hath reason to expect good ale unless he lies with his brewer.

Although the statute proportions the price of ale, by measure, to the price of barley, it does not proportion the quantity of barley to the measure of ale ; we must therefore suppose the quantity of barley used to a certain quantity of ale to be fixed, although we do not know, with certainty, what it was.

The first statute regulates the price of ale by the prices of wheat, barley, and oats : we have therefore reason to imagine that they were used indifferently, or perhaps altogether, in the composition of ale : and it appears that, in those days, not only wheat and barley, but also honey, was made use of for this purpose, the sheriff of Hampshire being allowed, in his accounts at the Exchequer, twenty-six shillings and ten-pence for *wheat, barley, and honey*, to make ale for the Duke of Saxony, in the 31st year of the reign of Henry the Second.*

L E T T E R XXXVIII.

DURING a period of several centuries, before the excesses of the people were made use of for the purpose of raising a revenue, it is no easy matter to find any anecdotes of ale-houses,

* Madox Hist. Excheq. vol. i. p. 369.

or their patrons, the intemperate. If drunkenness must ever remain one of the incorrigible vices of society, it is but fair that the purse of the drunkard should be drained its full proportion, for the general preservation of order and decorum, and that those who will not, by good example, add any thing to the general stock of morality, should pay for the preservation of order: it is, at the least, striking some sparks of good from a great mass of evil.

But, while general history and the laws are silent on the subject, some few lights are thrown upon it by Fleetwood, in his *Chronicon*.

The first instance is in 1302, when malt, ground, was three shillings and four-pence a quarter: wheat fold, at the same time, for four shillings a quarter.

In 1309, at a feast given by Ralph de Born, prior of St. Austin's, in Canterbury, on his installation-day, malt was six shillings a quarter: at the same feast, wheat cost seven shillings and two-pence a quarter.

In 1315 and 1316, malt was thirteen shillings and four-pence a quarter: wheat, at the same time, was twenty shillings; and, by the rains in harvest, wheat came to thirty and forty shillings a quarter, and good ale to two-pence a gallon; the better sort to three-pence; the best of all to four-pence. On this a proclamation was issued, that a gallon of ale should be sold for a penny; and that no wheat should be malted (*imbrastum*), which the Londoners had usually done, to the great consumption of corn, and sold it (*i. e.* ale made of it) at three-halfpence a gallon; the viler ale at a penny.

In 1339, wheat and malt bore the same price, nine shillings a quarter.

In 1423, malt was five shillings a quarter; wheat, eight shillings.

In 1425, ale was from a penny to three-halfpence a gallon.

In

In 1440, malt was thirteen shillings a quarter; wheat, twenty-four shillings.

In 1444, malt, four shillings; wheat, four shillings and four-pence a quarter.

In 1445, ale was one penny halfpenny a gallon.

In 1451, ale was at the same price.

In 1453, ale, one penny farthing a gallon.

In 1455, malt, one shilling and five-pence a quarter; wheat, one shilling and two-pence; ale, one penny a gallon.

In 1457, wheat, seven shillings and eight-pence a quarter; ale, one penny a gallon.

In 1459, wheat, five shillings a quarter; ale, one penny a gallon.

In 1460, wheat, eight shillings a quarter; ale, one penny a gallon.

In 1504, wheat, five shillings and eight-pence a quarter; ale, about three-pence a gallon.

In 1551, wheat, eight shillings a quarter; malt, five shillings and a penny.

In 1553, wheat, the same; malt, five shillings a quarter.

In 1554, 1555, 1556, 1557, wheat and malt remained at the same price as in 1553; but Mr. Stow says, that in 1557, before harvest, wheat rose in London to two pounds thirteen shillings and four-pence a quarter; malt, to two pounds four shillings; and, after harvest, wheat sunk to five shillings; malt, to six shillings and eight-pence a quarter: while, in the country, wheat remained at four shillings a quarter; malt, at four shillings and eight-pence.

In 1561, wheat, the quarter, eight shillings; malt, five shillings.

From these notices, taken, at unequal intervals, through the period of two centuries and a half, very few, if any, certain conclusions can be drawn, either with respect to the quantity
of

of the materials, or of the materials themselves, of which ale was in those days composed. Malt seems, in general, to bear a price somewhat proportional to the value of wheat; from which it also appears to have been sometimes made: but that proportion is so frequently broken through, especially in the year 1504, in the price of ale, that but little reliance can be placed on it.

The price of wheat and malt in 1557, in London, compared with its price in the country, strikes one as a remarkable instance of a deficiency of police in regulating the supply of the metropolis by its consumption; for, while the country enjoyed plenty, London experienced the advanced prices of a famine; the cause of which the history of the times does not sufficiently explain.

No price of hops is mentioned in Fleetwood, although the use of them had become general, and there had passed already one act of parliament regulating the importation of them. Mr. Pennant, in his *British Zoology*, quotes a distich to prove that carp and hops came into England the same year, viz. about 1514:

Turkies, carps, hops, pickerel, and beer,
Came into England all in one year.

And then produces an extract from "The Boke of St. Alban's," printed in 1496, to prove that carp was known here before. The regulations and establishment of the households of Henry Algon Percy, the fifth Earl of Northumberland, at his castles of Wressill and Lekinfield, in Yorkshire, in 1512, will prove, also, that hops were in general use before the year allotted for their introduction into England by the distich; and will also shew the proportion of hops used to the malt.

"Hopps for brewinge. — To make provision for five hundred and fifty-six pounds of hopps for brewinge of beere, for the expenses
of

of my house for one whole yeere, after the estimation of thirteen shillings and four-pence the hundred.

“Malte. — To make provision for two hundred and nine quarters, one bushel, of malte, after four shillings the quarter, by estimation.”

This is at the rate of about two pounds eleven ounces of hops to a quarter of malt; but some ale was brewed in which the quantity of hops was much less than in beer; consequently, the proportion of hops to a quarter of malt in beer might be more considerable.

These notices are inserted rather as matters of curiosity than as information tending to throw much light on the progress of ale-houses and their concomitant ebriety: however, they at least tend to shew, that neither the vice, nor the consumption of liquor which it occasioned, had as yet been sufficiently attended to by the legislature to occasion them either to regulate the immorality, or to raise a revenue from licensing its continuation.

In the mean time, houses of entertainment increased in number, and also in licentiousness. In the fourteenth century, Chaucer, in his *Canterbury Tales*, makes us acquainted with a considerable inn, at which the palmers spent a night, in their pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas, at Canterbury:

“In Southwerke at the Tabberd* as I lay,

“Redy to wendin on my pilgrimage

“To Canterbury with devote corage,

* * * * *

“The chambers and the stables werin wide,

“And well we werin esed at the best.”

* *Tabberd*. — A jacket, or sleeveless coat, worn formerly by noblemen, in the wars; now only by heralds: it was the sign of an inn in Southwark; it is now the sign of the Talbot. — *Urry's Glossary to Chaucer*.

His hofte was like a hofte of modern days,

“ Bold of his fpeeche, and wife, and well taught,
 “ And of manhode lakkid him right naught:
 “ And eke thereto he was a *mery* man.”

Shakspeare, who drew from nature, has alfo left us ftrong traits of character in his Hoftefs of Eaftcheap: he, in the beginning of the feventeenth century, gives us feveral instances of the manners of inn-keepers towards the end of the fourteenth: the Firft and Second Parts of his King Henry the Fourth abound with them.

But we want not the instances; we ftand not in need of the hint; we know that no man can be a vender of any commodity, who is not in his heart an encourager of the confumption of it.

Very early in the fixteenth century, in the nineteenth year of the reign of Henry the Seventh, the bad effects of the common fale of ale and beer were fo fenfibly felt, as to occafion parliament to reftrain the practice, and to authorize two juftices of the peace to reject fuch ale-houfes, as they fhall think proper. This appears to be the firft instance of the interference of the legiflature.

The next is about fifty years afterwards, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, the preamble to which has been already noticed in a former part of this tract. This firft gives to two juftices the power of licenfing ale-houfes or tippling-houfes, and directs them to take bond and recognizance of fuch as fhall be admitted to keep them, as well againft the ufing of unlawful games as for the maintenance of good order; it punifhes the venders of ale without licence, (except in the time of fairs,) by imprifonment, and recognizance with two fureties, not to offend in the fame manner again.

After the lapfe of another fifty years, parliament again, in the firft year of the reign of James the Firft, found it neceffary to interfere in the conduct of ale-houfes. The preamble to the act recites, with great propriety, their true ufe; “ for the receipt, relief, and

lodging, of way-faring people, and for the supply of the wants of such people as are not able to make their provision of victuals, and not for the entertainment of the idle to consume their money and time in a drunken manner."

This act not only punishes the alehouse-keeper, by a penalty of ten shillings to the poor, who suffers any person to remain tippling, "other than such as shall be invited by any traveller, and shall accompany him during his necessary abode there; and other than labouring and handicraftsmen in cities and towns corporate, and market-towns, upon the usual working-days, for one hour at dinner-time, to take their diet in an ale-house; and other than labourers and workmen, which, for the following of their work by the day, or by the great, shall, for the time of continuing their work there, sojourn, lodge, or victual, in any inn, ale-house, or other victualling-house;" but also inflicts a penalty of forty shillings, to be paid to the use of the poor, on the constables and church-wardens for neglect of duty, in not levying the penalty on the alehouse-keeper offending; and also regulates the price at which ale and beer shall be sold, viz. one full quart of the best ale or beer for a penny, and two quarts of the small; and, if any alehouse-keeper sell less, he forfeits twenty shillings. The penalties to be levied by the constables or church-wardens.

In the 4th year of the same reign, parliament again was compelled to attend to ale-houses; — "whereof," the preamble to the act says, "the multitudes and the abuses are become intolerable, and still do and are likely to increase." To prevent the evil, no person shall sell, utter, or deliver, any beer or ale, to any person not having a license to sell ale or beer, except for the convenient use and expense of his household, under the penalty of six shillings and eight-pence for every barrel.

And, by the next chapter, entitled, An Act for repressing the odious and loathsome Sin of Drunkenness, after making use of the following strong language as a preamble:

"Whereas

“Whereas the loathsome and odious sin of drunkenness is, of late, grown into common use within this realm, being the root and foundation of many other enormous sins, as blood-shed, stabbing, murder, swearing, fornication, adultery, and such like, to the great dishonour of God and of our nation, the overthrow of many good arts and manual trades, the disabling of divers workmen, and the impoverishing of many good subjects, abusively wasting the good creatures of God.”

The act inflicts a penalty of five shillings on every person convicted of drunkenness; three shillings and four-pence on every person who shall remain drinking and tippling in any ale-house in the city, town, village, or hamlet, where he lives. If any person shall be a second time convicted of drunkenness, he shall be bound, with two sureties, to the king, for his good behaviour, in the penalty of ten pounds.

And these offences shall be inquired of, and presented before justices of assize, justices of the peace in their quarter-sessions, mayors, bailiffs, and other head-officers of cities, towns, &c. by all constables, church-wardens, headboroughs, tithing-men, ale-conners, and sidesmen: the penalties are to go to the poor of the parish. The act was farther enforced, and made perpetual, by the 1st of Car. I. cap. 4.

Three years afterwards, the attention of the legislature was again called forth, and any alehouse-keeper, being convicted of any offence committed against either of these two acts, entitled, An Act to restrain haunting and tippling in Inns, Ale-houses, and other Victualling-Houses; and the Act against the Sin of Drunkenness; shall be disabled from keeping an ale-house for three years following such conviction.

And, by the 21st statute of this reign, chapter the seventh, the two last acts, which were at first only temporary, are made perpetual; and proof, by one witness only, is rendered necessary; and that one witness may be a person who has voluntarily confessed that

himself has been guilty of the offence ; a kind of evidence to which recourse ought never to be had, except in those instances of enormous crimes, where, for the safety of society, the conviction of an offender is necessary.

In the 1st year of Charles the First, foreigners, or persons not inhabiting in the towns or villages within which they shall be convicted of tippling in any ale-house, were made also liable to the penalty, which they were not liable to by the acts passed in the last parliament ; and the alehouse-keepers, who shall permit them to tittle, are also made liable to the same penalties as they were by former acts, with respect to the inhabitants ; as are also vintners, keepers of taverns, and victuallers ; and they are taken to be within the two former acts, and also within the statute then passed. Chapter 4.

By the statute, the 3d of Charles the First, chapter the fourth, reciting, in the preamble, that the act, made in the 5th year of Edward the Sixth, had not wrought such reformation as was intended, for that the fines were seldom levied, and many of the offenders are neither able to pay them, nor to bear their own charges of committing to gaol ; therefore it is enacted, that he, who keeps an ale-house without license, shall forfeit twenty shillings, which the constables or church-wardens shall levy for the use of the poor ; which, if the party is not able to pay, he shall be whipped ; and, for the second offence, he shall be committed to the house of correction, for the space of one month, there to be dealt with as a disorderly person ; and, if he shall again offend, and be again convicted, he shall be committed to the house of correction, there to remain until discharged by order of the justices in their general sessions.

Throughout the reign of James, and in the beginning of the reign of Charles the First, the legislature appears to have taken every means that penalties, imprisonment, and disgrace, could effect, to prevent the bad consequences arising from ale-houses and drunkenness. In fact, the evil had been severely felt for several centuries,

centuries, and had been attended to by government from the year 1503 to the date of the last-mentioned act, 1627, but without effect: ale-houses increased in number, and their frequenters in drunkenness, indolence, and licentiousness; and, although the laws respecting them were severe, they were deficient, no proper means having been provided to compel their execution; and were then, as the last act states, what we at present find them to be, — seldom or never put in force.

This seems to have been the last attempt of the legislature to regulate the moral conduct of ale-houses, and to prevent the bad effects of ebriety: and these several acts of parliament still remain the law, although, unfortunately for the cause of morality and economy, not the practice.

L E T T E R XXXIX.

AS yet the public revenue had not been considerably benefited by popular depravity; at least the money arising from the licensing ale-houses had not enriched the coffers of the state, but had filled the pockets of those minions of the crown who had sufficient interest at court to obtain the privilege of granting them, a remarkable instance of which occurred in the year 1621, when the House of Commons received many petitions against some grants which the king had made to certain individuals of the power of licensing inns and ale-houses; and which he declared, in his speech in the House of Lords, it was his intention to recal, having, till then, been ignorant of the ill effects which such patents had occasioned.

Soon after the restoration of Charles the Second, in the year 1660, parliament granted, among other profits arising from articles
of

of excise, those on beer, ale, mead, cider, perry, and foreign spirits, in augmentation of the royal revenue.

In the 9th of Queen Anne, a duty of four shillings was laid on any piece of vellum, parchment, or paper, on which shall be engrossed a license for retailing of wine; and one shilling on a similar license for retailing of beer and ale, or other excisable liquors.

And, by the 6th of George the First, all persons, whose office it shall be to take any recognizances on account of ale-licenses, shall be obliged to make out such ale-licenses on paper duly stamped, before they take the recognizances, under the penalty of ten pounds.

In the beginning of the next reign, parliament took into consideration the inconvenience which had arisen from persons being licensed to keep inns and common ale-houses by justices of the peace; who, living remote from the places of abode of such persons, might not be truly informed of the want of such inns and ale-houses, or of the characters of persons applying for licenses; and therefore enacted, by statute 2d, chapter 28, and section 11, "That no license shall be granted but at a general meeting of the justices, acting in the division where the persons applying for licenses dwell, on the 21st of September, or twenty days after, or at any other general meeting of the said justices, to be holden for the division wherein the said person resides; and that all licenses granted otherwise shall be void."

And, by the 26th of George the Second, chapter 31st, the above-mentioned clause is repealed; and the manner of licensing ale-houses, in that part of Great Britain called England, is regulated: and it is ordered, "that no license to keep any ale-house, &c. shall be granted to any person not licensed the year preceding, unless such person shall produce, at the general meeting of the justices in September, a certificate under the hands of the parson, vicar,

vicar, or curate, and the major part of the church-wardens and overseers, or else of three or four reputable and substantial householders and inhabitants of the parish, or place, where such ale-house is to be, setting forth that such person is of good fame, and sober life and conversation; and it shall be mentioned, in such license, that such certificate was produced, otherwise the license shall be void."

It remains to be observed, that, to prevent any license from being obtained on motives of interest in the magistrates, by their being concerned in habits of trade with the person licensed, no justice of the peace, being a brewer, inn-keeper, or distiller, or a seller of, or a dealer in, ale or spirituous liquors, or interested in any of the said trades, or being a maltster or victualler, shall be capable of granting licenses to sell ale or beer, by virtue of an act of parliament passed in the same year.

By this long category of pains, penalties, and restrictions, has the legislature attempted, through the lapse of near three centuries, to prevent the ill effects of ale-houses on the morals, the industry, and the economy, of the people; but they have attempted it in vain; and the government, not having been able to preserve our poor in habits of sobriety, has determined that the revenue should feel the good effects of public vice; and, therefore, by a variety of taxes on these commodities, the consumption of which is so general, and which taxes having increased nearly *pari passu* with the stamp-duties on the ale-licenses, (viz. from one shilling, in the reign of Queen Anne, to one-and-thirty shillings and six-pence, in the 24th year of the present reign, besides the duty on the house itself, if at a rent above fifteen pounds a year,) have raised from the public, in the four quarters of the year ending the 10th of October, 1792, the vast sum of five millions two hundred and nineteen thousand seven hundred and fifty-one pounds, as may be seen by the following extract from a statement presented to the House
of

of Commons, pursuant to an act of the 27th year of his Majesty's reign.*

Net-Produce of the Duties of Excise in England.

On beer	-	-	-	-	-	-	£2,012,373
Hops	-	-	-	-	-	-	82,776
Malt, perpetual duty	-	-	-	-	-	-	612,235
Spirits, British	-	-	-	-	-	-	644,104
Ditto, foreign	-	-	-	-	-	-	704,392
Licenses to retailers of spirituous liquors	-	-	-	-	-	-	160,704
Duties commenced	{	Spirits, British					111,307
5th Jan. 1791.		Ditto, foreign					142,737
		Malt					118,033
Annual malt, &c.	-	-	-	-	-	-	607,200
							<hr/>
							5,195,861
Customs on gin	-	-	-	-	-	-	23,890
							<hr/>
							5,219,751

When it is considered that none of that immense quantity of gin and malt spirits, which are smuggled into this country clear of all duties, and also none of the customs on foreign brandy, rum, and foreign wines, are taken into this account, which, alone, amount to upwards of seven hundred and fourteen thousand pounds; because these are liquors that we may suppose are drunk exclusively by the people of property, and are not generally the beverage of the common people; and, also, because we cannot, in such a general estimate as is here attempted to be made, state accurately how great a proportion of these commodities, which are excised,

* Annals of Agriculture, vol. xx. p. 100, 97.

is exported: we may, therefore, for an instant suppose, that the quantity exported, together with the consideration that foreign wines, brandy, and rum, are not the general drink of the mass of the people, will leave the sum-total of the duties of excise, together with the customs on gin, amounting to £5,219,751, a fair average annual tax, paid, by the people of England, for the liquor drank by eight millions five hundred thousand subjects, men, women, and children. This being allowed to be a probable average, where exactness cannot be pretended to, it will then appear, that each individual pays to the revenue for his beer, ale, spirits, and strong liquors, exclusive of the customs on foreign wines, brandy, and rum, above twelve shillings and three-pence farthing annually.

It can scarcely be supposed, that the sum paid by the consumers for these liquors can be short of five times the tax which government has laid on them; although the absolute proof that it is so (were such a proof possible) would be too tedious an investigation for this cursory inquiry: but, if either the article of ale or of spirits be separately examined, with respect to its tax and its retail price, it is imagined the proportion mentioned will be found to be far within the truth. We shall then perceive, that each individual expends above three pounds one shilling and four-pence farthing in that indulgence which Adam Smith does not reckon among the necessities of life.

Now let us have recourse to Mr. Howlett's computation of the number of labouring poor individuals in England, — six millions and a quarter, — these forming that class of the people for whom the poor's rates are raised; and it will be found that their expenditure in ale, beer, and spirituous liquors, will considerably exceed nineteen millions.

Nor can this be deemed an extravagant computation; when it is remembered, that the consumption of wines, and also that consumption of brandy and rum, which may be calculated as attach-

ing itself to the customs on those spirits, are, in this calculation, supposed to belong exclusively to the remainder of that population; which is calculated to amount, in the whole, to eight millions and a half, or to two millions and one quarter only of our fellow-subjects; the six millions and one quarter of the labouring-poor being deducted.

To compute the yearly earnings of the poor throughout England, is a matter infinitely above my ability; and to guess at them is taking a leap so much in the dark, as would be an imputation on the prudence of any man. Mr. King, in 1668, computed the income of labourers and out-servants at fifteen pounds a year, to a family consisting of three and a half persons; Chief-Justice Hale, about the same time, computed the expenses of a labourer's family, of six persons, at twenty-six pounds a year; supposing either of these computations nearly right at that time; and supposing the price of wages to be now double; and the expenses of a labourer's family, of the same number of persons, to be double; and more than that they cannot be; it will be found that the expenses of the ale-house will consume no inconsiderable proportion of a labourer's wages, and bear a large proportion to the total of his expenses.

Therefore, it must be apparent, that one great and leading source of the evil we complain of, in the state of the poor of this country, may be traced hence; from the vast sums which are spent in these licensed places of ebriety; which are so many in number, that it is a matter of surprise how the keepers of them can get a livelihood; by honest and sober conduct they could not; but it must be by an improper solicitation for drunken customers; by giving them credit for liquor, and encouraging them in bad habits; it appearing that the number of ale, spirit, and wine, licenses is, to the number of inhabitants, nearly as one to ninety; therefore, the profit on the expenses of a number, much short of ninety people, for strong liquors, enables a man, not only to support himself,
family,

family, and servants, but also, in many instances, to acquire a fortune; for, it should be mentioned, to the credit of our countrymen, that of ninety individuals, men, women, and children, probably half of them scarcely ever taste strong liquors, and are certainly no customers to ale-house-keepers.

The cause of a disease being known, it has been said, he must be either an ignorant or timid physician who knows not what remedy to prescribe, or, knowing it, is fearful of applying it.

If time lost, and the money spent, in the indulgence of drinking-habits, be in any degree the cause of the distresses of the poor, and of the increase of the rate for their relief and maintenance; it is plain that, in proportion as the opportunity of indulging in these habits is diminished, the bad effects of them will disappear; and it is an experimental truth, that, in proportion as you cease to indulge a habit, does the habit itself disappear.

It is true, a patient, whose constitution has been injured by drinking, may at first conceive he cannot exist without his usual indulgence: — but what will his physician prescribe? Probably not an immediate and total abstinence from strong liquors, but a gradual reduction of the quantity, and of the frequency of the indulgence: the patient, in the mean time, finds health return, his constitution is strengthened, and the bad habit is weakened; and, in the end, he perceives that health and sobriety are not incompatible.

In the same manner should the physicians of the state proceed with their patients,—the people; not by encouraging the *means* of indulgence, and restraining the *practice* by pains and penalties; these we know, by the experience of some centuries, have no effect; it is like holding a rod and a cherry to a child; the one will be eaten, and the other ought not, on such an occasion, to be used; neither ought the pains and penalties, in the various statutes respecting ebriety, to be inflicted, until the temptation is farther removed. If a labouring-man has but to step over his own threshold to the next door to indulge himself in drinking, it requires some

philosophy, while he has either money or credit, to refrain : oblige him to go a considerable distance, and he will not so often yield to the temptation.

If parliament should order a *census* of the people to be taken, by an actual numeration of them, by the constables of each parish, who might return the number to the high-constables, and they to the quarter-sessions in each county, and by a similar method in cities ; the actual population of the kingdom might easily be known.

The number of ale, spirit, and wine, licenses might also be known from the excise-office.

Whatever be the proportion that the number of these licenses bears to the amount of the population at present ; if that proportion should be decreased one-third by an experimental act of parliament for three years, the effect of such an experiment upon the morals of the people, the distresses of the poor, the poor's rates, and also upon the revenue, in respect to the produce of the duties of excise, would be known ; and, if it was on the whole advantageous to the morals, to the poor, and the rate for their maintenance was diminished, the experiment should be persisted in by a farther decrease of the proportion, between the number of people and the number of licenses, for the next three years, and so on, until the point be found, beyond which the decrease would be prejudicial.

In such an experiment, undoubtedly the good effect proposed would be opposed by a diminution of the revenue which arises from these articles of the excise ; for, it is plain, that the smaller the consumption of strong liquors, the less the revenue arising from that consumption ; and, the smaller the number of licenses, the less the produce of that branch of the revenue : but, if the end of government be the good of the governed, can this be an objection ? Surely not, unless revenue is of more consequence to a state than the morals, the religion, the happiness, of its subjects.

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If the revenue should prove deficient, through the experiment, and it could not, unless the experiment succeeded, would it not gain by other and better means? If the quantity of national drunkenness, indolence, and expensiveness in the articles of liquors, was diminished, would not the quantity of national morality, industry, and economy, be increased? And, in such a case, would not agriculture and manufactures restore that defalcation to the revenue, occasioned by a suppression of the habits of indulgence in drinking?

If a diminution of the number of ale-houses had no effect upon the habits of our fellow-subjects, but that the man, who would frequent one at his door, would do the same at a mile distance, — still some good will arise from the experiment: being fewer houses, each house will have more custom, and will not be tempted to encourage the habit in their customers, by the risk of trusting them: an ale-house-score does not increase in the simple ratio of the quantity drank, but in the compound proportion of the quantity drank, and the hazard incurred by giving credit.

Another advantage would accrue: the number being less, the conduct of those which remained might be better attended to, and the haunts of ebriety and dissoluteness might be brought more directly under the eye of the peace-officers; and, if the experiment was attended with a general revision of the statutes respecting them, the penalties might be put in a way of being levied without expecting neighbours, companions, or friends, to turn informers.

But the number of ale-houses being diminished, and, by that means, the custom at the remaining houses being increased, they could afford to pay more for their ale, wine, and spirit, licenses; and that not only in proportion to the decrease of the number, but because the additional custom they get will be free of house-rent and house-keeping; therefore, if this regulation should not diminish the quantity of liquor consumed, it will increase the revenue; and, if it should diminish the quantity consumed, it will proportionably
increase

increase the habits of sobriety, industry, and economy, which are better for the governed than revenue.

On the whole, it appears to be a truth plainly proved, that the wretched situation of the poor, and the expenses of their maintenance, are, in a great degree, increased by their habitual fondness of drinking, which induces laziness, want of economy, and that apathy or indifference to what may happen, which is the consequence of habits of ebriety, as it also is sometimes of excess of distress: it has also been proved, that, from the time when ale-houses were first licensed, the legislature has frequently complained of the bad effects to the morals and habits of the poor, from the encouragement these, their favourite haunts, gave to drinking and laziness; and it also appears, that the legislature has frequently interfered by penal statutes to prevent these consequences; but without effect.

It therefore now becomes their wisdom to try some other means: if the evil so long and so often complained of not only still exists, but is increasing; and, as the legislature of this country has, for near three centuries, found, by experience, that, with respect to penalties, the acts of the state are become a dead letter, and the statutes of the realm are disregarded;—that, in the mean time, the number of licenses, and the quantity of liquor consumed, are amazingly increased; and the consequential habits among the lower class of people have occasioned their maintenance and relief to become a serious burthen to that class of his majesty's subjects, which is next in number, as well as importance, to the state;—a diminution of the number of houses licensed for the sale of liquors is, therefore, the experiment which should now be tried,—an experiment which, if it should be somewhat injurious to the revenue *immediately*, will be *mediately* advantageous; and, at all events, beneficial to the community:—and, if the experiment should not be beneficial to the community, it cannot injure the revenue.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R XL.

THERE are very few human institutions, respecting the propriety of which there do not exist two opinions, the good and the bad: the for and the against are so interwoven in all our schemes and plans, that it is scarcely possible to find any existing establishment, in which, while one man or set of men sees nothing but good, another will see nothing but evil. The fair conclusion to be drawn is, that, in all our plans, institutions, and establishments, there exist both good and evil; but, as we will suppose they are generally established with a view to good, that evil which does not naturally, and consequentially, arise from them, but only proceeds from a misuse, or misapplication, should not be estimated as necessarily inherent in the plan. The evil, in this respect, resembles gluttony and drunkenness: no one but will allow that meat and drink are a necessary good, although the misuse of them produces those vices. In a former part of this tract box-clubs, or friendly societies, have been glanced at, and recommended, as tending to diminish the poor's rate: that they have that tendency, the very essence of their rules will prove; because their fund is created by a voluntary contribution among the members of the club, while in health, to support each other, by a weekly allowance, when diseased or disabled by accidents or age; without which allowance the majority of the members of most of them would receive a weekly support from the parish-rates. But it may be said they encourage drinking; for, in general, their meetings are held at a public-house; and, probably, instances may be produced where individuals have returned from their monthly or quarterly meetings intoxicated: and it also may be hinted, that their annual meeting, when they dine together, too frequently
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is a feast of intemperance. For my own part, I believe that all feasts are feasts of intemperance, both of the poor and the rich. But it should be added to the account, that, at feasts in general, every person is left at liberty to drink or not. At these societies; one of the first standing rules is against drunkenness; therefore that vice is neither the object of these clubs, nor of the members; and instances of it may be classed under the idea of misuse.

Another objection may be, and has been, made to them, viz. that they may be applied to bad, seditious, and turbulent, purposes. It is allowed to be possible; and, more especially, in manufacturing-towns; and there is no doubt but that instances of the kind have happened; that journeymen to different trades, in populous cities and towns, may have combined against their masters; may have refused to work but at a certain price; that seditious and treasonable toasts may have been drunk at these meetings; and that riot and disorder may have proceeded from the door of the public-house they frequent. It should be recollected that these instances only prove, where they have existed, an abuse of these societies; and are, by no means, a natural consequence flowing from the right use of them.

But be that as it may: the particular purport of these sheets respects the labouring-poor; the day-labourer in husbandry, not the mechanic, the artizan, or the manufacturing-poor, any farther than as they are involved in the general consideration of those who may become a burthen on society for their maintenance; and these abuses of friendly societies have not as yet been found prevalent where this description of men constitutes the majority of the club. The country-village, or market-town, whose inhabitants do not rise to opulence by manufactures, has not produced any other than good effects from friendly societies: among such bodies of men, therefore, they certainly tend to good, as far as their rules tend to good order, and the fund they voluntarily raise tends to relieve them
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in cases of illness and distress, when otherwise the relief must proceed from the poor's rate.

And the legislature has acted from the same opinion : nay more ; it has proceeded from an opinion of the *general* good they do to society, throughout the kingdom, in all places, and under all considerations ; as well in the populous manufacturing-towns as in the deserted villages. The parliament has acted upon a general principle ; and applaud and encourage when the good is general, influenced by a sentiment similar to that of the candid Critic :

Verum ubi plura nitent non ego paucis
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit
Aut humana parum cavit natura.

The act of parliament, which passed, in the last session, for the encouragement of friendly societies, authorizes me to assert that parliament approves of them generally, both by the preamble to the act, and by the solid and considerable encouragement given to them in the body of the act, only subjecting their rules to the inspection and approbation of the justices at their quarter-sessions.

The preamble to this wise and humane act of parliament states, that whereas the protection and encouragement of friendly societies, in this kingdom, for raising, by voluntary subscription of the members thereof, separate funds for the mutual relief and maintenance of the said members, in sickness, old age, and infirmity, is likely to be attended with very beneficial effects, by promoting the happiness of individuals, and, at the same time, diminishing the public burthens. May it, therefore, please your Majesty that it may be enacted,

Sec. 1. That any number of persons may form themselves into a society, and raise among themselves a fund for their mutual benefit, and make rules, impose fines, &c.

Sec. 2 and 3. That such rules shall be exhibited to the justices, in quarter-sessions, who may annul or confirm them ; and, if con-

firmed, that they shall be signed by the clerk of the peace, and be deposited with him; and, until their rules are so confirmed, no society shall be within the meaning of the act, and no confirmed rule shall be altered but at a general meeting of the society, and the alteration shall be subject to the review of the quarter-sessions.

Sec. 5. Such society may appoint officers; and securities shall be given, if required. The treasurers shall give bond to the clerk of the peace, and other officers to the treasurer; and the bonds shall not be chargeable with stamp-duty.

Sec. 6. Committees may be appointed, whose powers, if standing-committees, shall be declared in the rules of the society; and, if particular ones, shall be entered in a book, and shall be controllable by the society.

Sec. 7, 8, and 9. The treasurers or trustees shall lay out the surplus of contributions, and bring the proceeds to account for the use of the society, shall render accounts, and pay over-balances; and, in case of neglect, application may be made to the Court of Chancery, &c. and no fee shall be taken for such proceedings in any court.

Sec. 10 and 11. Executors shall pay money due to these societies before any other debts; and the effects of these societies shall be vested in the treasurers, or trustees, for the time being, who may bring and defend actions.

Sec. 12. But the societies must declare the purpose of their establishment before the confirmation of their rules by the court of quarter-sessions; and the uses to which the money subscribed shall be applied; and may inflict penalties for misapplication of money; and shall not be dissolved, unless by the consent of five-sixths of the then-existing members, and of all persons receiving, or entitled to receive, relief from the society; and their stock shall not be devisable but for the general purposes of the society.

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Sec. 13 and 14. Their rules shall be entered in a book, and received in evidence, and they may receive donations of any persons out of the society, which shall be applied to the purposes of the society.

Sec. 15 and 16. Where any members think themselves aggrieved, they may apply on oath to two or more justices, near to the place where such society is established, who are empowered to act, and make such order therein, as they shall think fit; but if, by the rules of any society, any matter shall be left to arbitration, the award of the arbitrators shall be final.

Sec. 17, 18, 19, 20. No member of a society producing a certificate thereof, shall be removeable from the parish where such society is established, until he is actually chargeable to that parish. These certificates shall be proved by oath of one of the witnesses attesting them before a magistrate; and, on complaint of parish-officers, justices may summon persons bringing certificates to be examined, and to make oath of their settlement; and copies of these examinations shall be given to the parties, which shall exempt them from future examination; and justices may declare, by an order in writing, the place of settlement of persons so examined, without issuing a warrant for their removal; and copies of such orders and of examinations shall be returned to the parish-officers of the place of settlement.

Sec. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25. Persons, aggrieved by the adjudication of justices, may appeal to the quarter-sessions, and no person residing in any parish under this act shall thereby gain a settlement, nor by paying of rates, nor any apprentice or servant to such person; but bastards shall have the same settlement as the mother, who shall reside in any parish, by virtue of this act.

Sec. 26. The charges of maintaining or removing residents, under this act, to be reimbursed by the parish to which the parties belong. The act to be deemed a public act.

This act of parliament will probably be productive of more good to the nation in general, than that enlightened and humane member of parliament,* from whom the bill originated, conceived; unless, while he intended to raise a revenue from the poor, in aid of the poor's rates, and for the support of themselves, he, with the spirit of prophecy, foretold, from the effect of this act, the gradual decline, and, in the end, the downfall, of that servile and expensive system, the law of settlements. No one act of the legislature respecting the poor since the first corner-stone of the system, the 43d of Elizabeth, is so replete with good; it holds out to them every encouragement, and only restrains, as societies or clubs, protected by the legislature, ought to be restrained, from doing mischief to that very government which protects, encourages, and rewards, them. The compliance with the requisition of exhibiting their rules to the justices at the quarter-sessions is easy and free of expense; the preservers of the peace of the county are, at the same time, the natural judges of what rules may be inimical to that peace; the encouragement is substantial; and the members of these clubs see it; for they crowd to have their rules recorded by the clerk of the peace; and the poor in general know the advantages; for they are solicitous to become members of friendly societies.

* At the time this letter was written, the author was ignorant that the poor in particular, and the county in general, were obliged to George Rose, Esq. M. P. one of the joint secretaries to the Treasury, for this most excellent act of parliament; nor was he then personally known to that gentleman, but has now every reason to congratulate his county, that, by the strong and comprehensive abilities of Mr. Pitt, applied to the subject of these letters, aided by the thorough knowledge and indefatigable attention of Mr. Rose, together with those other honourable members of the House of Commons, who attended Mr. Pitt many times through the month of February, 1796, on the subject of the poor-laws, it is to be expected, that at length the nation will receive the benefit of an act of parliament, which may turn the present tide of idleness and dissipation among the poor to industrious habits and a more moral line of conduct.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R XLI.

IN the nineteenth volume of the Annals of Agriculture, are the rules of a friendly society, instituted under the patronage of several gentlemen, whom the poor of a parish in Norfolk have the happiness to call their neighbours and friends; which rules appear to be very well adapted to the purposes of such friendly societies in general; more especially because the control of them is by these rules invested in the gentlemen of opulence in the place, together with the clergyman; and because the times of their meeting at a public-house are restrained to the four quarters of the year, and two feasts, (possibly that might be better altered to one,) instead of obliging the members to meet monthly. The only article in which these rules appear to be materially deficient is, that the club does not in any form of words declare the purposes of its establishment, although they may certainly be collected from the general body of the rules. A copy of these rules and orders shall be added; as they may tend to assist any person, into whose hands these pages may fall, in establishing a similar society, on a better principle, and with better regulations, than those usually drawn up for such occasions; and the purpose of the society shall be properly declared according to the direction of the act of parliament, called the Friendly-Society Act.

Rules and orders agreed upon to be observed by the members of a friendly society, instituted the day of , in the year , for the purpose of raising, by voluntary subscription of the members thereof, and other charitable persons who may be inclined to give contributions thereto, a fund for the mutual relief and maintenance of the said members in sickness, accidents, infirmity, and old age.

Art. 1. That no person, after the first quarter-day after the establishment of this society, exceeding the age of forty-five years;

nor

nor any person having any apparent infirmity of mind or distemper of body, shall ever be admitted a member.

2. That on the Saturday before the full moon preceding the four principal quarterly days of the year, shall be held the ordinary meeting, in the evening, from seven to nine in the summer, and from six to eight in the winter.

3. That no person shall ever be admitted a member but at one of the quarterly meetings, and by the majority of the trustees present, as well as by a majority of the other members.

4. That every member is to be present at the said quarterly meetings, and to pay four-pence towards the reckoning of that evening; or, having some reasonable excuse which may be transmitted to the society by the clerk, and shall be admitted as such by the majority present, the clerk shall tender, for each, four-pence; or, if the excuse be not deemed valid, then the member so absent shall pay one shilling. The said penalties to be put into the common stock.

5. That whoever desires to be admitted into this society shall appear at one of the said quarterly meetings, and if then and there, as above approved of, he shall pay down one guinea, (besides the four-pence to be spent,) towards maintaining the common stock or fund, and thereby he shall become a full member: but, if not then capable to pay the whole, he must pay on each quarterly day, besides the four-pence for expense, for the months immediately preceding, one shilling per month to the stock, and so to be continued for twenty-one weekly months, and not to receive any benefit from the fund till the whole twenty-one shillings is paid.

6. That there shall be two feasts in the year; the one on the quarterly meeting before Christmas, and the other on the Saturday before Whit-Sunday; and, in order to abridge the loss of time as much as possible, the dinners not to be ready before three o'clock, as by that time, with a little management, the day's work may be finished; for which feasts every member shall, on admittance, pay
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one shilling, and clear his club-arrears, if any be due, besides the payment of his wonted subscription, or be excluded; by which arrears is hereby explained to be meant, a regular payment of one shilling for every weekly month during the continuance of this society, to be put into the common box or fund.

7. And, for the better regulating the affairs of this society, the following trustees are hereby appointed, viz.

or the heirs of the said gentlemen, as proprietors of their estates in the said parish, and the rector or vicar of the said parish, for the time being, upon condition that each of the said gentlemen, their heirs or successors, shall pay two guineas towards the common stock or box, as qualifying themselves for the trust hereby reposed in them.

8. That the majority of the said trustees shall either personally act, or choose two stewards out of the members of the club, to receive and pay all the money belonging to this society, taking receipts for whatever they pay; and if the said stewards, or either of them, shall be found guilty of any breach of trust in their office, or of fraudulently converting to any other use than that of the society any sum or sums of money, or shall make any false or unjust account thereof, they the said stewards shall, upon discovery, be forthwith discharged of their office, and expelled the society; and the aforesaid trustees shall be accountable for, and shall make good, every embezzlement or injury the society may, through the neglect or fault of themselves, or their stewards, have sustained; and the said trustees, or their stewards, shall attend the society before the first half-hour of each quarterly meeting is expired, or the stewards shall each forfeit one shilling to the box or common stock.

9. For the security of the cash or other public stock of the society, there shall be prepared a convenient box, with three locks and three keys, each of different constructions from the other, and each of the stewards to have a key, and the master of the house where the box is kept shall be in possession of the third; and there shall
always

always be kept by the clerk a regular cash-book, and the copy of each day's receipt or expense, to be locked up in the box, which is not to be opened, nor any money to be taken out, but at the said quarterly meetings; the money in the mean time wanted by the sick members, to be supplied by the trustees, or their stewards.

10. Every person, become a full member of this society, if he falls sick, lame, or blind, so as to become incapable of following his trade or employ, after seven days notice given to the stewards and apothecary, or one of them, shall receive out of the box or common stock, if confined to his bed, a weekly allowance of five shillings and sixpence; but, if able to go about, not more than four shillings, till he shall be so far recovered as to follow his trade or employ, provided that his sickness or lameness does not continue longer than one whole year; but, if it does, then he shall receive two shillings and sixpence a week, for as long a time as he shall be afflicted; but, if any such member shall recover before the seven days notice is expired, he will not be entitled to any weekly allowance.

11. In case the stewards shall have sickness, urgent business, or be otherwise disabled, with reasonable cause, the trustees may appoint some other member (for whom likewise they are to be responsible) to officiate or act in their stead.

12. Whereas an apothecary will be constantly employed for the service of this society, and is to be paid out of the common stock, and every other proper case recommended to the county-hospital,* it is hereby farther agreed, that every member (the clerk excepted) shall pay sixpence, at the first quarterly meeting after the accident happened, into the fund, towards paying the extraordinary expense that may occur upon any one of the members which may break a bone, leg, arm, &c. (except by drunkenness, wrestling, football-playing, &c.) or for want of such payment be excluded; and during

* If there is one in the county.

the time any member receives money from the box, he shall be excluded all payments to the box or house, except upon deaths, feasts, and broken bones.

13. Whenever any member dies, all the members are to attend his funeral, and all (the clerk excepted, who is to give notice of the burial) shall contribute, at the first quarterly meeting after the funeral, sixpence each, towards defraying the expenses of his funeral, &c. and every member, who does not so attend, shall pay on the subsequent quarterly night one shilling into the box, or, in defect of either of those payments, to be for the future excluded; except the case of the small-pox, when no attendance will be required.

14. Whenever any member dies, there shall be allowed out of the box for his burial one guinea and a half; and, if he has a widow or children, to them two guineas.

15. And, on the death of every full member's lawful wife, the husband, giving notice to the stewards, shall receive one guinea and a half from the box, (if demanded,) the said quarterly meeting-night after her decease, towards paying the funeral-charges; upon which occasion every member shall, on the same night, or whenever they appear, pay three-pence towards it, or be excluded.

16. The stewards shall each go once in seven days to visit each sick member, and shall be allowed for each visit, at the next meeting, sixpence, if no complaint shall be by the sick preferred against him or them, at the next general meeting, for want of proper attention and care; and the said stewards shall forfeit to the box one shilling, to be paid at the next meeting, for every time that he refuses to go; but, if it be found that any member has brought upon himself sickness, distemper, infirmity, or inability to follow his trade or employment by debauchery, intercourse with lewd women, venereal taint, drunkenness, fighting, wrestling, or football-playing, in such sort of cases, he shall not have any weekly allowance from the society; or if any member counterfeits himself sick or infirm, as thereby not able to follow his business or trade, and shall for a time,

by means of such imposition, obtain and receive any weekly allowance or support, such member shall, for the future, be excluded from every benefit which might otherwise have accrued to him from the society. And, when any member is so far recovered from his sickness or indisposition as to be able to follow his business, he shall, within three days, give notice to one of the stewards, or be for ever excluded, unless he pays to the box, at the next general meeting, one whole week's allowance. And, if any member is known by any other member to work during the continuance of his allowance, he shall be expelled, as shall also that other member who does not inform the society of it; and the sick or infirm are to be regularly paid by the trustees or their stewards.

17. And, that every thing may at all times be transacted with regularity, decency, and decorum, in this society, no member or members shall have any drink of any kind to themselves separately from the rest of the society, nor shall any liquors be admitted into the room where the society meets during the time of their sitting, but what is ordered in by the stewards; and, when the appointed and limited hours for the sitting of this society are expired, one of the stewards shall give notice thereof, and every one of the members shall depart the room in a civil and peaceable manner, and it shall accordingly be cleared by one of the stewards before he departs the room. And if any member, during the time of the society's sitting, *shall speak irreverently of the Almighty, disrespectfully of his Majesty or his government, or shall lay wagers, or curse, swear, blaspheme, talk obscenely, use taunting, reviling, or abusive, language, or apparently seeks to quarrel with any of the members*, he shall submit to a fine, to be put into the common stock, such as the majority of this society shall think fit to impose, according to the nature and circumstances of the offence, so that it does not exceed two shillings, nor be less than sixpence.

18. And if any member, after any meeting of this society, shall speak ill of, or cast any reflections on, any member or members of
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the society, on or for what has been said or agreed to by the society, he shall forfeit five shillings to the common stock, or be excluded.

19. No part of the common stock of this society to be lent out, but upon lawful interest, government security, and with the consent of the majority assembled, at one of their quarterly meetings.

20. If the wife of any of the members come into the society-room, or be therein while he is present, he shall forfeit sixpence to the fund, besides immediately leading her out, under pain of forfeiting his right to any part of the subscription or common stock of this society.

21. If any member be cast into prison for debt, he shall not be allowed to pay any subscription or forfeitures, nor receive any part of the society's property while in prison. When he comes out, he shall be received again as a member, without cost or charge.

22. The clerk shall be allowed the same benefit from the box as any other member of this society, without being subject to pay any money towards it, except for forfeits.

23. The cash and minute books to be bought out of the common stock, and also to be renewed as often as shall be necessary, and the minutes of each meeting to be regularly signed by the trustees or stewards present, and may at any time be inspected by any of the members, on payment of sixpence to the clerk, and sixpence to the common fund.

24. Hereby power is also invested in the majority of this society, at the time of each Whitsuntide meeting, to make an annual agreement with a surgeon and apothecary, whose stipend may and should be abated, upon apparent neglect.

L E T T E R XLII.

NOW, that this subject of the poor, their rights, duties, and the laws respecting them, draws near to its conclusion, it cannot be judged foreign to the design of these Letters, although not immediately within the professed purpose of it, to throw out some observations, and offer a few strictures, on the duties and conduct of the domestic menial servants of this kingdom, they being, in general, derived from, and are constantly adding to, the number of those who fall under the supervision of our poor-laws.

And here it should first be understood, that servants in husbandry, journeymen, or servants to any trade or manufactory, although they may properly, in some instances, be styled menial servants, are not considered in the following pages; because their conduct is regulated by acts of parliament, and they are under the cognizance of the magistrate; but such only as are necessary in the arrangement of domestic economy, or are retained for the purposes of luxury, vanity, or ostentation; and those domestics are so intermixed in the various departments of service, that it is not easy to separate them, as it would be very difficult, in the arrangement of any person's household, for a stranger to determine what servants are of domestic use and necessity solely, and what are supernumerary, or retained for the gratification of vanity or luxury.

But, in whatever department they may be engaged, they, in these times, are principally derived from that class of our fellow-subjects which have been the immediate object of our attention; and not from a more respectable class of citizens, whose children formerly thought it no disparagement to be retained in families of superior consideration or opulence.

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In those days, the tenantry of the kingdom thought that a son or daughter, who was retained, as a menial servant, in a house of wealth and consequence, was placed in a respectable situation; and the best principles of honesty, sobriety, and civility, were inculcated, that their children might preserve themselves in those situations, which the good conduct and reputation of their parents had obtained for them.

In those days the *kinder* duties of master and servant were reciprocally performed. The servants, on their part, strove for the good-will of those they served, by diligence, honesty, sobriety, regular behaviour, and attention to the interests of their immediate retainer, by an economic use of such property as they were entrusted with; and they were rather humble friends than eye-servants; and they received, exclusive of their wages, their diet, their lodging, and such part of their clothing as they agreed for, the advice, the encouragement, the protection, the friendship, of their employer, and seldom changed their place, but when they changed a life of servitude for a life of independence. This reciprocity of duties and affections is beautifully exemplified by Shakespear in his Orlando and Adam:

Adam. Master, go on, and I will follow thee
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty.
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Orlando. There is an old poor man,
Who after me hath many a weary step
Limp'd in pure love; till he be first suffic'd,
Oppress'd with two weak evils, age and hunger,
I will not touch a bit.

Thus these kinder duties were formerly reciprocally performed, or our Shakespear has not followed truth and nature in portraying the character of a faithful servant and grateful master.

But

But does the drama of the present stage hold out such examples to our view? Alas, no! Yet the stage still professes, and, with equal truth, to hold the mirror up to nature; to shew virtue its own image, vice her own likeness. Let us see what *personæ* the modern stage gives us for modern servants. The entertainment called High Life below Stairs is in point: no one has ever disputed the exactness of the representation to the reality of a modern servants hall: and where the public, by their unanimous approbation of a theatric representation, have stamped it with the reputation of being an exact picture of real life, be it allowed to argue from it as from a fact: it is, at the least, a less degrading and more cleanly manner of identifying such a fact, than stepping into a kitchen, to be able to assert it as such.

And can masters and mistresses, be they in whatever station of rank and opulence it may have pleased the Almighty to place them, knowing that such things are, suffer them to be? They can, and they do, because they are possessed with fears and apprehensions, more alarming than those arising from the dissipation of their property, and which force them tamely to submit to the taunts and insolence of their liveried and pampered domestics.

The evil complained of originates from profusion, and is fostered by vanity; which hourly submits to the grossest indignities in private, to support an appearance of magnificence in public, after the fundamental basis of all real greatness, independence of mind, is departed.

And, did the evil stop among people of this description, were only the proud, the vain, the ostentatious, and those whose character corresponds with Sallust's terse expressions, the *alieni appetentes, suorum profusi*, subject to these degrading and vexatious circumstances, the evil ought to be left to correct itself; or, in other words, the punishment flowing from the crime, the sufferers should receive no assistance from the interference of the legislature: they are pilfered
by,

by, and stand in awe of, their servants; true; but it is no more than they deserve.

But, unfortunately for all ranks and denominations of people in this kingdom, who are so far elevated, by circumstances, above the want of the necessaries of life as to keep a domestic, they are all involved in the contagion, and suffer in their private economy and domestic comfort, from the prevalence of a vice encouraged by the great. Because my lord the nabob, or the commissary pampers a swarm of unprincipled wretches in his household, who pilfer him of his property, the most humble master in the vale of private life must submit to similar depredations, or clean his own shoes: this is surely an evil, as it involves the innocent in those consequences which only the guilty ought to feel.

But, although we suffer and labour under the disease, it is not an easy matter to point out the cure; the legislature seems either not to have thought it a blot in the police of the country, or it is a blot they have been cautious of hitting; the only attempts made were in the years 1529 and 1792, in which last year an act of parliament subjected those who gave a forged character, or stated in a character of a servant what was not true, to a penalty of 20*l*.

This can be but of little service as the act is framed; for, the first clause respects only those who personate a master or mistress, &c. and give any false, forged, or counterfeited, character to any person offering as a servant.

The second clause goes only to those who shall assert that a servant has been hired for a period or station other than such period or station as he or she has been hired in.

The third, to those who shall assert that a servant was discharged at any other time, or had not been hired in any previous service, contrary to the fact: and there are no other clauses respecting giving characters of servants.

The fourth and fifth clauses respect only the persons who offer themselves as servants, pretending to have served where they have
not,

not, or offering themselves with a false certificate, or who shall alter a certificate, or, having been in service before, shall pretend the contrary: the remaining clauses affix the penalty, point out the mode of conviction, and the distribution of the penalty when recovered.

Had the legislature probed the foul wound to the bottom, they would have discovered that no lenient application can be equal to a cure; nothing short of making a breach of trust, in the instance of menial domestic servants, a felony, will stop the contagion; this was done in 1529; but those instances where the value of the goods embezzled did not exceed forty shillings, which are at least equal to ten pounds of the present money, are not subject to the act; and, it is well known, the depredations of servants are generally composed of a mass of minutiae, such as victuals, wine, beer in small quantities; each item being individually of small value, and the act of embezzling difficult of proof, but easy to commit, and that facility of commission, arising from a necessary confidence reposed in the servant, to enable him to do the duties of his place, for the performance of which, he is hired at the price of his food, clothing, and considerable wages; therefore, an act of parliament constituting a single instance of embezzlement of the property of his employer felony, be the value what it may, would have the same effect as those statutes, which make it felony, to steal a trifling value in property, which, necessarily from the nature of it, lies exposed to depredations; or, probably, the putting the property of people, with respect to their servants, on the same footing as wood, turnips, cabbages, &c. are placed with respect to people stealing them; for the first offence, on summary proof before a magistrate, commitment to the house of correction for a limited time, and the second offence felony; if followed up, by treating the concealment, by the master or mistress, of such breach of trust, as a misdemeanor, indictable at the quarter-sessions, of which concealment, a character given for honesty, and proof of the master or mistress

mistress knowing at the time that the servant had been guilty of a breach of trust, shall be held sufficient to convict such master or mistress. Such a regulation would probably have some effect.

But there ought to be established, by universal opinion among all those who retain any menial servants, a sense of rectitude and point of honour, with respect to the characters which are given of servants: the line of truth to be pursued should be that plain and comprehensive one described in the *voir dire* of a witness at the bar of a court of justice; if the character of a servant is requested, and is granted, that character, with respect to his honesty and sobriety, the material points of his moral conduct, should contain *the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth*; the giver of the character should speak of the servant as he is, nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.

During the halcyon days of peace and prosperity, the minister shewed his attention to those in the middling ranks of society, by relieving them from the duty on female servants: it was well done, both because the tax was not productive, and because it was unpopular: should the present necessary war we are engaged in rage throughout another campaign, of which there is but little doubt, surely somewhat might be raised for the revenue, from the number of our countrymen and women in service, who certainly may be said to be better fed than taught; by a per centage upon their wages, to be retained by their master or mistress, accountable to the collectors of the servants tax, on any servants leaving their places within a year: a less per centage if within two years; unless the persons who retained them, either break up house-keeping, or actually and *bona fide* reduce the number of their servants, or are convicted, summarily before a magistrate, of personal ill-usage or refusal to pay wages; and this idea, with respect to the justice of it, may be supported on the following generally-allowed fact; that no master or mistress willingly changes servants; with respect to livery-servants, a change is a real and considerable expense, besides

the disagreeable circumstance of introducing strangers into a private family ; therefore, it in general is the fault of the servant.

Disputes between masters and their servants, in a variety of trades and manufactures, are, by various acts of parliament, referred to a justice of the peace ; and, as these acts have increased in number and in extent of operation from an early part of the reign of Charles the Second to the present time, we are at least justified in saying, that they have had the advantage of experience, and have proved serviceable.

What is the reason, that an act of parliament, framed on principles similar to that for regulating disputes between masters and servants in husbandry, and adapted to the situation of menial servants, hired for the purpose of domestic arrangement, in private families, should not be tried ? I confess myself unable to see the objection.

Were the servants, who are retained in the families of individuals, of the same class and description of people they formerly consisted of ; did they proceed from the cadets of the best families in the kingdom ; were they now, as formerly, in the families of our nobility, the younger children of respectable houses ; or did they in general proceed from the tenantry of the kingdom ; and assisted now, as they did then, by being domesticated in the house of their immediate superior, to preserve the chain of connection, which, in the time of the feudal tenures, subsisted from the cottage to the throne ; there would then be no occasion to restrain their conduct by severe laws of the state ; their actions would then be under the inspection of their immediate superior ; to whom, in those times, they were accustomed to look up, as to a patron and protector : but such connections and such habits have passed away with the system which familiarized them to our ancestors ; and our present army of domestics arises from a different quarter, is endued with different principles and ideas, and, for the safety of our property and the peace of our families, requires coercion and correction

tion with a different hand; it is not principle, but fear, which must now keep them honest; it is not affection, but interest, which can insure their civility; and gratitude will no longer preserve their fidelity.

At the same time, as these strictures are thrown out, with respect to a necessary interference of the legislature in the regulation of the conduct of menial servants; which, in these days of liberality and license, may seem to some as founded on a harsh or illiberal principle; but which, in fact, flow from the necessity of the case, which calls aloud for the licentiousness of bad servants to be restrained, and their peculations to be repressed; it is but right to observe, that good servants should undoubtedly be brought forward, as proper objects of reward and encouragement; the best proof of their desert is the continuance a length of time in a place, and leaving that place handsomely, and with a good character; a per centage upon all the wages they have received, after the wages of the three first years are deducted; to be paid them by their master or mistress, on quitting the service, in addition to their wages, might be the general reward, by the sanction of an act of parliament to that purpose; unless such a society, for the encouragement of good servants, as is established in the metropolis, should be generally subscribed to; or similar societies, being established throughout the kingdom; should render such an interference of the legislature unnecessary.

L E T T E R XLIII.

IT has been asserted, in a former part of this investigation, that local inconvenience and distress, arising from the number of the poor, and the expenses of maintaining them, had occasioned many

districts within the county of Suffolk to apply to parliament for the power of incorporating themselves, and of regulating the employment and maintenance of the poor, within those respective districts, by certain rules agreed upon among themselves; that, in consequence thereof, several acts of parliament had passed incorporating the districts applying for them; that the poor have been since governed and regulated within those districts, according to the powers given by such acts; and that the convenience and inconvenience, experienced from the execution of them, should be elucidated by the best information that can be obtained from the districts thus incorporated.

In consequence of this engagement I determined to visit the houses of industry which have been erected within the county of Suffolk; that, from actual inspection, personal inquiry, and ocular demonstration, the facts respecting these institutions, the conduct of them, and the consequences which have arisen to the public from them, might, with some certainty, be stated; and that some pertinent observations might be made on those facts and consequences.

Such notices as were taken on the spot, and the informations received since, by letter, from the gentlemen who attend to the management of them, with such also as have, by their direction, been communicated by letters from the governors, shall be stated, according to the priority, in point of time, of the incorporating-acts, and the erection of the different houses of industry.

The middle of the summer was the time chosen for the excursion; and the houses were inspected, as suited convenience, from eight in the morning until eight at night.

The following questions were put to the governors of the houses of industry, and their answers to them minuted, when satisfactory answers could be obtained, and are incorporated with the other information collected. In some instances, the governor or attendant could

could not immediately give an answer by word of mouth, but engaged to do it in writing.

1. How many poor men, women, and children, have been admitted, since the erection of the house, annually?

2. How many have died, since the same time, annually?

3. Has any, and what, part of the debt contracted by authority of parliament been paid?

4. Have the poor-rates in the district incorporated been increased or diminished?

5. What are the manufactures in which the poor are employed?

6. Is the sale of any of the manufactures, and which of them, diminished by the war?

7. Are the poor, or any of them, and how many, employed in agriculture?

8. Is any particular disease epidemic, or more prevalent than another, among the poor, and what is the nature of such disease?

These questions were calculated for the purpose, to form some judgement whether these institutions tend to increase the chance of human life, to diminish the poor's rate, both in times of peace and war, and also to form some idea of the comparative profit arising in these houses from the manufactures of wool and hemp.

The hundreds of Colneis and Carlford were incorporated, by act of parliament, in the 29th year of his late majesty's reign; and their house of industry in the parish of Naeton was built in 1757, and first inhabited in 1758.

The information which could be obtained on the spot was not much to be depended on, the governor and his wife being from home when the visit was made, which was about six o'clock on the evening of the committee-day, and no person in the way was able to give any material information. My minutes were as follow:

Manufactures

Manufactures are cordage, sacks, plough-lines, and spinning for Norwich.

Boys, employed in spinning hemp, earn 6*d.* a day, one with another.

Girls employed in spinning wool : the great girls stinted at 6*d.* a day, but receive for their work only half.

The dormitory is too much crowded : three or four boys in a bed, two men : there ought to be no more than two children in a bed, and one man. This number in one bed occasioned the air to be disagreeable to the smell. The same was not observed in any of the other houses.

The dining-hall is very neat and commodious.

Land, in occupation by the house, five acres. Two cows are kept. Only one man at work in agriculture, no boys.

The poor are now allowed more liberty, without the walls of the area on which the house and offices stand, than formerly, and are more healthy than they were.

The following answer to the foregoing questions was transmitted to me by Mr. John Enefer, clerk to the guardians of the house, by the order of Philip B. Brooke, Esq. one of the directors of that house.

NACTON HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.

THE poor are employed in wool-spinning, twine-spinning, making sacks, &c.; the neat profits of which, from an average of the last seven years, amount to 277*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* a year.

The poor's rates were at first 1487*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.* a year, but advanced, at Michaelmas, 1790, to 2603*l.* 7*s.* 0*d.* a year.

The expenditure upon an average for the last seven years, 2367*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* annually.

The original debt was 4800*l.* is now 4400*l.* and will be reduced to 500*l.* more at Michaelmas next, 1793.

The

The men and women, able to work, earn from twopence to sixpence a day.

The children are stinted (according to their abilities, and not according to their ages) from one halfpenny to sixpence a day.

Very few hands are employed in agriculture.

The number of poor admitted into the house, and the number of deaths in the house, for the last 14 years :

Years.	Admitted.				Deaths.
1779	-	-	166	-	46
1780	-	-	177	-	33
1781	-	-	193	-	68
1782	-	-	174	-	33
1783	-	-	168	-	23
1784	-	-	155	-	24
1785	-	-	112	-	23
1786	-	-	112	-	27
1787	-	-	108	-	13
1788	-	-	136	-	11
1789	-	-	133	-	11
1790	-	-	142	-	35
1791	-	-	125	-	21
1792	-	-	116	-	21
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2017				389	

The most prevalent diseases in the house have been the small-pox, measles, and hooping-cough.

The *hundred of Blything* was incorporated in 1764, and the house of industry built on a rising ground in the parish of Bulcamp, about a mile from Bliburgh.

They have two manufactures for the use of the house, viz. linen and woollen, for stockings and wearing-apparel. Linen is made in
the

the house to the value of three shillings and sixpence a yard, but they fell nothing.

They spin for the Norwich woollen-manufactures, and have earned four hundred pounds a year.

Forty-six parishes were incorporated.

The average-number of poor admitted the first five years amounted to about 203.

There are now in summer about 250, in winter about 300, in the house.

Many children are admitted without their parents.

About eight hundred pounds are annually paid to out-pensioners.

The sum borrowed was 12,000*l.*; half was paid in 1780, the whole in 1791.

The average of the poor's rates annually in the incorporated parishes, when the hundred was first incorporated, was not above one shilling in the pound, which rate was diminished one-eighth in 1780, when half the debt was paid.

None of the poor are, at present, employed in agriculture.

In 1781, a putrid fever raged in the neighbourhood: the town of Bliburgh lost one-third of its inhabitants; this house lost 130 of its poor.

Twenty-five acres of land belong to the house; thirty acres are hired, some for the plough, some lies in pasture, some in garden.

Sir John Rous, Bart. was so obliging as to send me a list of admissions and deaths in this house since the institution, by which it appears, that, from October 13th, 1766, to August 8th, 1793, five thousand two hundred and seven paupers have been admitted, and one thousand three hundred and eighty-one have died.

The hundreds of Mutford and Lothingland were incorporated in 1764: their house of industry is in the parish of Oulton, near Lowestoft, and has been built twenty-seven years.

The

The number of parishes incorporated is twenty-four; their income about twelve hundred a year; of this nearly two hundred arises from earnings.

The sum borrowed was 6200*l*. Expenses in building were about 3000*l*. The house is erected on a frugal plan, and will contain 200 poor. For the first seven years, not above one hundred were admitted annually; but the annual number now amounts to 150, or thereabouts. 1700*l*. of the original debt has been paid, besides 300*l*. a debt contracted when the house was under bad management.

The poor's rates were advanced, in 1781, ten per cent. more than the assessment of the parishes, when incorporated, and have not been diminished; but 300*l*. of the debt continues to be paid annually.

The register of deaths has not been regularly kept during the first years of the institution; but the average-number, during the last six years, has been eleven in a year.

The prevailing manufacture is, making nets for the herring-fishery. The merchants furnish the twine, and it is braided by the yard.

Hemp: what they grow is manufactured in the house; but, lately, the weaving has been put out.

Woollen yarn is also spun; but the trade is at present bad; therefore, only such are employed in spinning wool who can do nothing else.

A child's stint, either for braiding nets, spinning yarn or hemp, is fourpence a day. Several children, not above seven years of age, were braiding.

Sometimes some of the poor are let out to work in husbandry at sixpence a day: their employment is chiefly weeding.

Weekly earnings of the house, on an average, four pounds.

Out-allowances were, last year, 55*l*. and are rather increasing, but supposed to be bad management, and that they ought to be diminished.

Land, in occupation, twelve acres, all arable; two, yearly, sown with hemp. No cows kept.

The hundred of Wangford incorporated 1764.

The house of industry at Shipmeadow, between Harlestown and Beccles, has been built twenty-six years. Twenty-seven parishes are incorporated. The annual income from their rates is 1750*l*. The general number of poor in the house about two hundred; of deaths about twenty in a year: amount of labour, about three pounds a week: their employment spinning for the Norwich manufacturers: there is no manufactory in the house.

Out-allowances, about eighty pounds a year.

Children are taken from large families.

Original debt, 8500*l*. of which 4000*l*. is paid.

Land, forty-five acres; twenty-seven of them arable. Five cows are kept.

There is no chapel; they attend the parish-church.*

The hundreds of Loes and Wilford were incorporated in 1765.

The house of industry, which is in the parish of Melton, was erected the same year, and is on a more extended and expensive scale than any yet examined. Their dining-hall is very spacious and neat, as are the dormitories. There are apartments appropriated to the surgeon; and those belonging to the governor are large and convenient. The cellars and offices are excellent. The boys school and the girls school are both of them good rooms. There are also rooms which are made use of as a penitentiary lodging for refractory people, and those guilty of offences which require solitary restraint, by virtue of the act of parliament, enabling these hundreds to borrow an additional sum of money, which act passed in 1790.

* Oulton and Shipmeadow houses of industry were visited, and the notices of them taken, by Samuel Brise, Esq. of Clare, a near relation and worthy friend, who accompanied me to all the other houses of industry in the county.

Their manufactures are linen and woollen: the first for their own use; the profits on the last are considerably diminished by the war.

The number of poor in the house is between 230 and 240.

Their out-allowances are large; by the last rules and orders, drawn up for regulating the proceedings of the directors and acting guardians, printed in 1792, although they seem to have limited the sums to be allowed with prudence: they do not seem to have taken care that the number of poor, who shall receive out-allowances, shall be sufficiently reduced, by obliging them to come into the house.

These out-allowances are the cause of the increase of expense, as far as they tend to the old system, to avoid which was the occasion of erecting these houses.

By a letter which I was favoured with from a gentleman of this district,* it appears that the original debt of these hundreds was

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9200*l*.

* Having received from this gentleman an answer to a letter I lately sent him, requesting him to state the average-rate of assessments, in the pound, in the hundreds of Locs and Wilford, and to inform me whether the population of the hundreds was increased or decreased; in which, after saying he is sorry it is not in his power to answer either of my questions, his letter proceeds thus:

“ The account you have given, in your History of the Poor, as received from me, is notoriously contrary to fact, and equally impossible *that I* could have given any such information. I have no copy of my letter, and therefore cannot attempt to correct the error, but trust you will do me the justice to leave my name out entirely in your intended new edition.”

I have, accordingly, done this gentleman the justice to leave his name out entirely in this edition; and now I must do *myself the justice* to print that part of his letter, dated Dec. 8, 1793, which refers to the information in question, that the public may judge whether or not the information contained therein justifies the abstract given in the first edition of this work, which abstract is here re-printed without any alteration.

(C O P Y.)

1. Our original debt was £9200.
2. Our present debt is £10050.

9200*l.* the present debt is 10,050*l.*; that the maximum of the poor's rates, in these hundreds, was not more, including the Marshalsea-money, &c. than 15*d.* in the pound annually, estimating at rack-rent when the hundreds were incorporated; and that they remain the same.

The average-number of deaths, the last three years, was about sixteen annually: the governor could give me no information in this respect farther back, he not having been in that office longer than that period.

A surgeon, school-master, and school-mistress, reside in the house.

There were between thirty and forty infirm and diseased poor in the sick-wards; but the greatest number of them complaining of the infirmities of age only, and sore legs, which appears to be a prevailing disease.

The poor children are taught different trades in the house besides manufactures, such as tailors, shoe-makers; and are employed in those trades for the use of the house.

Three poor men are employed in agriculture.

The quantity of land, about thirty acres. They raise about three acres of hemp, and manufacture it. There is about an acre and a half of garden; the rest pasture. Six cows are kept.

The late governor, as I was informed, had considerably injured the revenue of the house by the conduct of the manufactures.

3 and 4. I cannot answer with any degree of certainty. The several parishes within the two hundreds were ordered to deliver up their books to committees appointed for the purpose, who took the seven years next preceding the last seven years, and, adding the amount together, divided it by seven, and thus formed an average for each respective parish, without paying any attention to pound-rates: hence the average in the pound for the hundreds is unknown.

In this parish our poor-rates, including Marshalsea-money, which, of late, has been very high, do not exceed 15*d.* in the pound, rack-rent; and, were other parishes as fully rated, I am of opinion that 15*d.* would be the ultimatum.

L E T T E R XLIV.

BEING now, as it were, in imagination, brought back to that part of the county which produced the objects of my inquiries, by the recapitulation of the information I received, no place can be more proper than the present to return my thanks to those gentlemen who seconded my views, by their influence in the several houses of industry, at the time and since, by communication, by letter, of their knowledge as to the particular points respecting which their information was requested; and also to testify, that the excellent order, neatness, and regularity, preserved in all the houses then visited, prove that their officers and servants, who produced every where, and at all hours, such instances of attention to their duty, merit great praise.

The hundred of Samford was incorporated in 1765: the house of industry was erected, in 1766, in the parish of Tattingstone, and opened for the reception of the poor, at Michaelmas, the same year.

The original sum borrowed was 8250*l.* of which 2450*l.* has been paid.

The number of parishes incorporated is 25; yearly assessments, 2262*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.*

The rates were settled, in 1766, at 2*s.* 8*d.* in the pound, by the year, and remain the same.

Average-number of poor, in the house, during four years, beginning in 1786, and ending in 1789, is 1055; and of deaths, for the same time, is 117.

The average-number of poor admitted, from 1766, annually, could not be exactly ascertained, but is about 260: the average of deaths, from the same year, is 37 9-13ths annually: but the small-pox, followed by a putrid fever, has been in the house three times,

viz.

viz. in the years 1780, 1781, 1791, when the number of deaths was 76, 81, 56.

The poor are principally employed in spinning for Norwich; the profit of which was, for the four years ending with 1789, £ 1833 5 8
 The out-allowances for the same years amounted to . . . 1042 8 8
 The income for the same years amounted to 11154 3 3
 The expenditure for the same years amounted to . . . 11144 8 5

There are at present eleven packs of top-work, valued at above 300*l.* left unfold, by reason of the stagnation of the Norwich trade.

Only two men and three boys are at present employed in husbandry.

The officers of the house are a surgeon, chaplain, governor, matron.

Land belonging to the house, 36 acres.

No sick in the infirmary.

In the dormitories, which were large, there were two or three windows opposite to the general range, which have great effect in keeping the rooms airy and sweet.

Most of the particulars of this house of industry, and also of the following house at Barham, were communicated to me by the Rev. Mr. Grant, the clergyman of Tattingstone, who very laudably interested himself in putting the Tattingstone-house into a similar train of management as Barham, about the year 1790, when the management of the former appeared to be unprofitable.

The hundreds of Bosmere and Claydon were incorporated in 1765, the house of industry was erected in 1766, in the parish of Barham, and opened for the reception of the poor in October the same year.

The original sum borrowed was 9994*l.* of which 7294*l.* has been paid.

The

The number of parishes incorporated is thirty-five; the yearly assessments 256*l.* 4*s.* 10*d.*; the rates remain the same.

The number of poor in the house for six years, ending in 1792, was 1332; the number of deaths, during the same period, amounted to 253.

The number of deaths was increased considerably in the years 1790 and 1791 by the small-pox, one hundred and twenty-seven having died in those two years. The information received on this head was, that the poor were averse to inoculation; therefore, when the pest-house, one of which each house of industry has, was full, there were no means left to prevent the natural small-pox going through the house of industry itself: the consequence has been a considerable mortality, but probably not greater than when the same disease has attacked the village-poor, and its fatal effects have not been prevented by inoculation. Barham-house has now two pest-houses at a little distance from it.

The poor are principally employed in spinning for Norwich: their profit has been on an average about 200*l.* annually; but, for the half-year ending at Midsummer, 1793, only 72*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.*

Their income has amounted for seven years, ending 1792,	
to	£ 203 18 11
Their expenditure for the same time	17680 12 9
	<hr/>
Profit to the house for that period	2637 4 2

Their average out-allowances for four years, ending 1789, have been annually 34*l.* 9*s.* 4*d.*

Seventeen aged and infirm people are in the sick-wards.

Land belonging to the house, 20 acres; of which two are garden. Six cows are kept.

There were in this house more women between 20 and 30 years of age than in any other of the houses of industry.

The

The *hundred of Cosford, and the parish of Polsted*, was incorporated, 1779, and the house of industry erected in 1780, in the parish of Semer.

The original debt was 8000*l.* is now reduced to 180*l.* and an annuity of 20*l.* a year granted to a person upward of sixty years of age.

The poor's rates have been reduced three-eighths, and a considerable fund remains in hand.

The poor in the house are employed in spinning wool, which is washed and combed in the house, and the yarn sold at Norwich by commission; the sale of which is considerably affected by the war, a considerable quantity now remaining in hand.

The poor, when able, are employed in agriculture, as opportunity offers.

The average-number of paupers in the house is generally about one hundred and eighty.

The average-number of burials, since the institution, has been annually about twenty-six; the much greater proportion died the first two years after the house was inhabited; which was attributed to the paupers, on their first coming in, having too much meat-diet, after having suffered extreme poverty. This cause has been since guarded against, and the burials have been much fewer.

The house has been free from any epidemic disease since it has been inhabited: when the small-pox has prevailed in the country, there has been two general inoculations with great success each time.

When I visited this house of industry, the governor was from home; as was the Rev. Mr. Cooke, the son of that worthy magistrate, who, from the first institution of the house, to the time of his death, regulated the management of it with so much care, attention, and economy, as to make it productive, in the shortest space of time, of more beneficial effects than any other in the county of Suffolk. It was from an answer to a letter I took the liberty

liberty of writing to his son, that the foregoing account has been extracted ; the observations made, and information obtained on the spot, are as follow, from my own notes.

The chief manufactory is spinning yarn for Norwich ; but some of the top-work is wove into serge for the women's jackets at Melford ; coarse thickset is bought at Norwich for clothes ; linen cloth, for shirts and shifts, at Hadleigh.

Paupers in the house 25th of July, 1793 ; men 27, women 42 ; children, between the ages of twelve and twenty, 22 ; under the age of twelve, 74 ; in all, 165.

No men are out at day-labour ; four boys, twelve or thirteen years of age, scaring birds at the wages they can earn by spinning, which is five-pence a day, none more.

The girls, at the age of thirteen, are put to service ; boys, at the age of fourteen.

Twenty-two packs of yarn remain in store, value about 600*l.* ; land belonging to the house, about twelve acres ; of which two are garden, ten meadow and pasture.

Two cows are kept in summer-time : they make all their butter in summer, and buy salt butter in the winter.

Only four sick in the infirmary : every thing appeared neat, the poor healthy and comfortable.

The hundred of Stow, incorporated in 1780.

The house of industry, in the parish of One-house, opened for the reception of paupers, Oct. 11, 1781.

The sum first borrowed was only 8000*l.* but the expense of building the house so much exceeded the sum intended to be laid out for that purpose, that an additional sum of 4150*l.* was afterwards borrowed ; and the rates were increased one quarter by common consent for three years : they remain now the same as at first.

Fifteen hundred pounds have been paid off in the whole, at the proportion of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds per annum.

The poor in the house are employed in spinning top-work for Norwich; the wool is bought into the house; the clothing for the use of the house is made from the thrums, ends, and nibbings, and such spinning as is unfit for the Norwich market; their best rugs are also made from these materials; no part of their clothing is put out to be made, except stockings.

The sale of the top-work is considerably affected by the war: twelve packs are left in the house unfold; value about twenty-four pounds each pack.

None are employed in agriculture at present; only two men are in the house who can do harvest-work; some children are sometimes employed in weeding; all who are able are employed in hop-picking; but, it is conceived, that nothing is saved by such employment.

The average-number of paupers in the house is about two hundred.

The number of burials since Oct. 11, 1780, to August 1, 1793, as follows:

Oct. 11, 1780, to Jan. 1, 1781	-	8	
		1781	- 25
		1782	- 51 a putrid fever.
		1783	- 61 a putrid fever.
		1784	- 51 a putrid fever.
		1785	- 14
		1786	- 2
		1787	- 17
		1788	- 15
		1789	- 11
		1790	- 13
		1791	- 19
		1792	- 18
To August 1st	-	1793	- 17

These

These thirteen years form an average of 24 2-13ths yearly; or, omitting the three years, when the putrid fever prevailed, the average of the remaining ten years is only 15 1-10th.

Annual income from rates, 1987*l.*; from labour, manufactory, &c. not less than 350*l.* annually, for the last ten or eleven years; but has amounted to 104*l.* only the last half-year, owing to the stagnation of the Norwich manufactory.

Out-allowances from 250*l.* to 300*l.* annually; but these are increasing, and expected to continue so, from the stagnation of trade.

There has been no fever or epidemic disorder in the house since 1784, although there has been much sickness in the hundred; nor were there in the house, at the time these notices were taken, any of the paupers so sick as to be confined to their beds.

Number of acres 24; of these 3½ are arable, one acre garden, the rest pasture. Four cows are kept, and two horses.

In this house, the spinning-rooms and working-rooms are divided by partitions, in such a manner, as that but few spin or work together; as are also the dormitories. There are not more than seventeen beds in any: this is an improvement not observable in any other of the houses of industry, and tends much to the preservation of health and order.

A tailor and shoemaker are kept in the house.

A schoolmaster to teach the children to read, and a mistress to teach the little children. Relief is given to large families by taking those children into the house which are a burthen to their parents. The same method is in fact practised by all; consequently, the children are taken in very young.

L E T T E R XLV.

A Necessary attention to the duties of a magistrate, together with compassion for the distressed of my poor neighbours, particularly for those who were employed in daily labour on my estate, had occasioned me to visit, at times, the sick cottager, and the miserable pauper in a parish work-house. The situation of the first, whose narrow tenement forbade the possibility of separating the sick from the well, the parent from the children, or the children themselves from each other; that miserable economy in fitting up the cottage, which too generally has denied the only bed-room either a fire-place or a casement-window to ventilate the air; the noise of querulous children, the stench of confined air, rendered epidemic by morbid effluvia; the vermin, too, frequently swarming on the bodies and rags of the wretched inhabitants; all these causes, acting together, procrastinate affliction, prevent a return of health, and indicate a depth of misery, which hard labour and industry ought not in sickness to be liable to endure. Neither did the parish-work-house, the last sad refuge of miserable indigence, offer a less disagreeable spectacle; the want of room, and the bad management of that which they possess, occasion similar inconveniences: the clothes, or rather the covering, of the inhabitants; the too frequent instances of infamous debauchery, arising from the two sexes of all ages and dispositions kept together; the ignorance and filth the children are brought up in; and the general spirit of rigid economy which the contracting master of the work-house practises, as well in diet as in clothing, lodging, and cleanliness, to scrape from misery, as soon as possible, a property which may enable him to retire from his disagreeable avocation; give propriety to the opinion and expression; that a parish-work-house is too often a parish-bawdry-house, always a bug-bear to frighten modest distress from applying for relief.

In

In the incorporated hundreds, the houses of industry strike one in a different light; they are all of them built in as dry, healthy, and pleasant, situations, as the vicinity affords; the offices, such as the kitchen, brew-house, bake-house, buttery, laundry, larder, cellars, are all large, convenient, and kept exceeding neat: the work-rooms are large, well-aired, and the sexes are kept apart, both in hours of work and recreation.

The dormitories are also large, airy, and conveniently disposed; separate rooms for children of each sex, adults, and aged; the married have each a separate apartment to themselves; mothers with nurse-children are also by themselves.

The infirmaries are large, convenient, airy, and comfortable; none without fire-places.

All the houses have a proper room for the necessary dispensary; and most of them a surgeon's room besides.

The halls, in all, are large, convenient, well ventilated, with two or more fire-places in them, and calculated, with respect to room, for the reception of full as many as the other conveniences of the house can contain.

The chapels are all sufficiently large, neat, and plain; several of them rather tending to grandeur and elegance. There were two houses, which had no chapel: one of them made use of a room ample enough for the congregation, properly fitted up, and kept very neat: the other house attended the parish-church.

The apartments for the governor were in all the houses large, and conveniently disposed: in one or two of the houses of industry, these apartments were rather more spacious and elegant than necessary: there are also convenient storehouses and warehouses, for keeping the manufacture of the house, the raw materials, and the clothing, &c. for the use of the inhabitants.

The land about the houses belonging to them, particularly the gardens, are all calculated for producing a sufficient quantity of
vegetable

vegetable diet, so necessary to the health as well as agreeable to the palate of the inhabitants.

In general, the appearance of all the houses of industry, in the approach to them, somewhat resembles what we may suppose of the hospitable large mansions of our ancestors, in those times when the gentry of the country spent their rents among their neighbours.

The interior of these houses must occasion a most agreeable surprise to all those who have not before seen poverty, but in its miserable cottage or more miserable work-house.

In looking over my notes, I find that the affirmative neatness which prevailed from the cellar to the garret, in all the houses, with very few exceptions in particular departments, occasioned not only a memorandum of the fact, but gave rise to a conception which possibly lies more in imagination than reality, that, where a deficiency in this respect is observable in any domicile, a concomitant deficiency is also observable in the healthy looks of the inhabitants.

This neatness, which had so pleasing an effect on the eye, was the cause also that the other senses were not disgusted by that constant attendant on collected filth and foul air, a noisome stench, as deleterious to human life as it is in general nauseating to those who accidentally breathe such an atmosphere.

The practice of frequently white-washing does much in preserving the air of these houses wholesome and sweet, but the constant attention of those who perform the offices of the house is absolutely necessary, and even that is insufficient, unless the halls, working-rooms, and dormitories, have the external air admitted through the windows, whenever it can be done with safety to the inhabitants, with respect to catching cold: this practice of keeping the windows open cannot be trusted to the paupers themselves; for, strange to tell, the general complaint against them was, that they
would

would not only not attend to keeping them open, but, if the adults and aged had their choice, such depravity arises from habit, they would live in that atmosphere of putrid air, which would undoubtedly produce contagion.

The neatness and *propreté* which prevailed in their halls at the hour of refection were also laudably observable, most of these houses of industry being visited at the hours of breakfast, dinner, or supper. At times I have felt disgust when requested to take some refreshment which has been offered me in a cottage; a disgust arising from the absence of that neatness which attends the tables of those among whom it has been my lot to live: but no want of neatness in these houses created disgust; a breakfast, dinner, or supper, might have been eaten at their tables with a keen appetite.

Their bread was, in all the houses, particularly pleasant; it was good brown bread, made from the flour deprived of the coarsest of its bran: white bread was also baked for the infirm, the convalescent, and young children.

Their cheese was in general good, although frequently the cheese of the country: in one house they bought Dutch cheese, which was stronger in its taste, and consequently to some palates not so pleasant.

The small-beer was also pleasant: — no wonder; they bought the best malt and hops, brewed a large quantity at a time, and kept it in excellent cellars: ale was also brewed, in inferior quantities, and given to the convalescent, and to those whom the governor thought proper, either as a necessary refreshment, or as a reward; and it was also distributed, at stated times, to the whole house.

It did not occur to me to take minutes of the bill of diet in any of the houses, because no doubt has been suggested that it is not wholesome and sufficient: that, in some instances, it has been too abundant, may be suspected, as well from the relics which were
seen

seen after their meals, as from the idea thrown out by one of the directors in a letter which has been alluded to.*

The application of these facts, which have been stated, as well upon the credit of personal inspection, and information from those whose duty it certainly was, and whose inclination it appeared to be, to give true and full information upon the subject, as from those gentlemen, also, who obligingly communicated any information by letter, now remains to be made to three important queries.

1. Have these institutions amended the morals of the poor?
2. Have they tended to diminish the burthen of expense to society attending their relief and maintenance?
3. Have they increased, or do they tend to decrease, the chance of human life?

With respect to the first question, it may be answered in the affirmative without a possibility of contradiction.

They have amended the morals of the lower orders of people, if the proportional few instances of indictments, at the quarter-sessions, for actions of inferior criminality, which lead to greater crimes, will prove the fact; and it does, in this instance, in a remarkable manner: four inquisitions of murder have been, within this twelve-month, found by the coroner for the county of Suffolk, not one of them in either of the incorporated hundreds. There are twenty-three hundreds in the county; twelve of them are incorporated, and maintain their poor in houses of industry.

If the general good order and regulation the labouring-poor are kept in throughout the incorporated districts, which good order is evidenced by their general conduct and conversation, and by their observation of those laws, the breach of which may tend to endanger the lives, and diminish the safety and comfort, of his ma-

* See the extract from Mr. Cook's letter respecting the Semer house of industry.

jeſty's ſubjects in general ; ſuch as drivers riding on their waggons ; tippling in ale-houſes, and the ſmaller immoralities and improprieties of conduct ; if ſuch attention to the orders of ſociety proves the fact :

If the reſpectful and civil behaviour of the poor to their ſuperiors, the very rare inſtances of children being ſeduced to ſteal wood, turnips, &c. and to the commiſſion of other ſmall thefts ; if theſe and ſimilar proofs of good morals, unfortunately not prevalent in thoſe diſtricts within the county where theſe houſes are not inſtituted ; if ſuch inſtances prove the fact, experience tells us theſe inſtitutions have tended to reform the morals of the poor.

And the prophetic ſpirit of theory had, beforehand, informed thoſe, who wiſhed to form a judgement on the ſubject, that the effect could not be otherwiſe.

A large building, calculated for the reception of the poor of the diſtrict, ſituated in the moſt healthy ſituation, with convenient offices of all kinds, the inhabitants of which are under the regulation of well-choſen officers, ſubject to excellent rules, all of them calculated to promote regularity, induſtry, morality, and a religious ſentiment.

The hours of work, reſreſhment, and ſleep, uniform and regular.

The children, from the earlieſt age, on leaving their mother's arms, are under the care of proper dames, who teach them obedience, and give them the habit of attention.

When more advanced in years, ſchool-maſters teach them to read ; and the ſuperintendants of the working-rooms, ſome induſtrious employment, and take care that their hours of work ſhall not be paſſed in idleneſs : here they are generally ſtinted, ſo that greater induſtry is rewarded with greater leiſure.

The duties of religion are expected to be regularly attended by all the poor of all ages, no excuſe being admitted but illneſs.

It required no prophetic spirit to foretel, that, these duties and this system of regularity being persevered in, the best effects must, of consequence, ensue to the morals of the poor of all ages, and to those of the rising generation in particular.

In these houses of industry, therefore, may be found that plan of education of poor children carried into effect, which has been, in former pages of this tract, so warmly recommended to be pursued, by the means of schools of industry, united with Sunday-schools.

But it should be remembered, that these schools, in the houses of industry, are not general for the children of *all* the poor within the incorporated parishes; only those whose poverty induces their parents to ask parish-relief are sent here, and, of those, only such children as are the greatest burthen to their parents: the children of those poor who are not petitioners for relief, and those children of the poor who are, and whom their parents do not choose should be sent to the house of industry, are kept at home, and have not the benefit of this plan of education; and it is a circumstance worthy of remark, that parents, in general, from whom to take, for a time, the idle, mischievous, least useful, and most burthensome, part of their family, to bring them up, without any care or expense to themselves, in habits of industry and decency, is a very great relief, are very much averse to sending their children to the houses of industry; from what cause it is difficult to tell; but it is plain that no good cause can give rise to this aversion: suppose it to be parental affection and fondness, which makes them, with regret, part with their children, the answer is obvious; they are sent but a little way from them, are in the neighbourhood, where they may be seen at all proper times, and, when seen, will be seen in a state of cleanliness instead of filth, of employment instead of idleness, with neat clothing and wholesome diet instead of filthy rags and an empty belly: whereas parents, in higher situations of life, who feel that fondness of affection in, at least, an equal degree,

gree, voluntarily, and at a considerable expense, send their children to seminaries of learning and schools, for education, at a much greater distance, and do not see them for many months together: much credit cannot, therefore, be given to the sentiment of affection: the only one which can be mentioned as an apology for this aversion, and every other reason, must be founded on a bad principle, and consequently ought not to have any weight.

Were these institutions erected upon a plan which would admit of taking *all* the children of the poor, from the time they are capable of being taught some employment, and keeping them in the house, as in a school, until such employment is learned, and regular habits of industry acquired, together with an abhorrence of that life of idleness and theft to which the children of the poor are prone, either naturally, or by the encouragement of their parents, every good which can be expected to arise, from such an institution as has been recommended, might thus be attained to, in a house of industry, at a very trifling increase of expense, if at any, and which expense would be amply repaid by the general good effect: but such a plan, could the houses of industry receive them, must be seconded by the court of quarter-sessions issuing an order, prohibiting relief to be given to such parents who shall refuse to let their children go to these schools, when appointed to them by the overseers of the respective parishes.

L E T T E R XLVI.

TO determine the second question, with certainty, recourse must be had to the notices taken, respecting the fact, in the different incorporations; and it will be found, that, in some, the

poor's rates have been diminished; in others, they remain the same as at the time of the institution; and, in a few, the rates have been increased: the different instances shall be pointed out, and some observations made on the facts, as they have been stated.

Blything-hundred; Bulcamp house of industry; the whole debt, 12000*l.* has been paid off; the rates were diminished one-eighth in 1780; and, as they were not on an average above one shilling in the pound annually when first incorporated, they are now inconsiderable.

The hundred of Cosford, and the parish of Polsted; the house of industry at Semer; the whole debt, 8000*l.* has been paid off, except an annuity of 20*l.* a year, and 180*l.*; but they have stock more than sufficient to discharge these remaining demands; the poor's rates have been diminished three-eighths; and the rates were very moderate when the hundred was incorporated.

Wangford-hundred house of industry, at Shipmeadow; original debt 8500*l.* of which 4000*l.* is paid; rates remain the same.

The hundred of Samford; the house of industry at Tattingstone; the original sum borrowed 8250*l.* of which 2450*l.* have been paid; the rates were settled at 2*s.* 8*d.* in the pound annually, and remain the same.

Hundreds of Bosmere and Claydon; the house of industry at Barham; the original sum borrowed 9994*l.* of which 7294*l.* have been paid; the rates remain the same.

Stow-hundred; the house of industry at Onehouse, near Stowmarket; the original sum borrowed 12150*l.* of which 1500*l.* have been paid; the rates remain the same.

Hundreds of Colneis and Carlford; the house of industry at Naeton; the original debt was 4800*l.* is now 3900*l.* the rates were increased at Midsummer, 1790, from 1487*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* annually, to 2367*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.*; but from information it appears, that the rates were not more than sixteen or eighteen pence annually, when the average was fixed; and the revenue of the house has exceeded its expenditure

expenditure on an average of the last seven years 513*l.* 11*s.* 10*d.* annually.

Hundreds of Mutford and Lothingland ; the house of industry at Oulton ; the original debt 6500*l.* of which 2000*l.* has been paid off ; the poor's rates are advanced ten per cent. but 300*l.* of the debt is annually paid off.

Hundreds of Loes and Wilford ; the house of industry at Melton ; their original debt was 9200*l.* their present debt is 10050*l.* their poor-rates, together with their county-rates, do not now exceed 15*d.* in the pound at rack-rent.

By this recapitulation it appears, that, at two of the houses of industry, the rates have been considerably diminished, and the original debt annihilated.

At four, the rates remain ; but a considerable part of the original debt has been paid.

At two, the rates have been increased, and the debt diminished : at the last house of industry the debt has been increased, and the rates remain the same.

The question, whether houses of industry tend to diminish the expense of the relief and maintenance of the poor, is therefore answered in the affirmative, since in two the rates are diminished, the debt is paid ; in four, the debt has been considerably diminished, consequently the annual balance in their favour might have been applied to the purpose of diminishing the rates, *pari passu*, with the debt ; in two of the others the balances have been applied hitherto to diminish the debt only, and the rates have increased ; in one, the debt is somewhat increased, and the rates remain the same, at the low average of 15*d.* in the pound annually.

When the average, at which these parishes settled their rates, at the time they were incorporated, and the number of years which have elapsed since that average was settled, are considered ; in some, being between thirty and forty years ; and in none less than twelve or fourteen ; and compared with the proportion the rates then bore

to

to a pound, and the proportion they would now bear, had there been no house of industry; taking the advance of the poor's rate in the other parishes throughout the kingdom in general, and in Suffolk in particular, as they are proved to be, by the returns of the overseers to the inquiries made by parliament, in the year 1776, and 1783, 4, and 5, as the rule of computation, and no better can be obtained; in which returns it appears, that, in the two contiguous hundreds in Suffolk, not incorporate, Risbridge and Babergh, the *net expenses* of the poor alone had advanced from 11,023*l.* 7*s.* 11*d.* to 13,840*l.* 3*s.* 9*d.* being a difference of 2817*l.* or thereabouts, in the course of eight years, or above 25*l.* 9*s.* per cent. an advance that brings forward the most unthrifty management of any of the houses of industry into a state of positive prosperity and reduction of expense; it will therefore be found, that not only where the rates have been stationary, but where they have advanced, and in the instance where the debt has increased, the poor's rates have been very much decreased, from what they would have been, had the poor been managed according to the old and the common system; we may therefore with certainty apply the old adage, *non progredi est regredi*, with respect to the expenses of the poor in all the incorporated houses of industry.

On the whole, although in an instance or two, originating from an improvident mode of building the houses of industry at first, more subsequent expenses have been incurred than were at that time foreseen, and consequently a larger revenue became necessary to pay the interest of the additional sum they were obliged to borrow, and to support the expenses of the house than was at first thought sufficient; and, in another instance, the dishonesty or profusion of the then governor has so disarranged the affairs of the house, as to render a new loan, and consequently an increased rate, convenient; yet, on the whole, it is conceived, that not the least shadow of doubt can be raised, but that even, in these instances, the revenues of the houses are increasing beyond the disbursements, the debt is
diminishing,

diminishing, and the rates will fall even beneath that low medium they have hitherto preserved; and which rates, had there been no house of industry, would probably have risen twenty-five, or even fifty, per cent. above their present amount.

L E T T E R XLVII.

THE other question, whether the houses of industry have increased the chance of human life, involves in it such complicated considerations, is a question of such uncertainty of proof, a comparison with the state of population in country-villages, and with the chance of human life of people of particular ages and particular situations only, and not with human life in general, being to be taken into consideration, and there being no data with which the comparison of the facts can be made, the tables of the chance of human life being of too general a nature, and the facts themselves as to deaths, in houses of industry, not being sufficiently particularised as to age and state of patients health when admitted to give an exact result, that some general observations on the deaths which have happened in these houses, compared with the numbers admitted, is all that shall be attempted, leaving the reader to make up his own mind, as well as he is able, from the imperfect sketch of the question it is in my power to offer, to which I shall very humbly add my opinion, without presuming to dictate any positive conclusion to his judgement.

And, first, it will be proper to pay some attention to the situation of the poor, and their families, before they take refuge from the misery of extreme poverty in a house of industry. What are, at that time, their expectations of health and life?

They

They are so reduced by poverty as not to be able to maintain themselves and their families, and therefore they become inmates of a house of industry; consequently, the constitution, both of parents and children, must have been debilitated by want of necessary food, raiment, and shelter, that none can be said to be admitted in sound health: no estimate can, therefore, be made of their chance of life, in comparison with the inhabitants of villages, towns, or cities, in general.

They are afflicted with disease, either parents or children, and therefore they are sent, by the parish-officers, to a house of industry: the chance of life with such is still decreasing.

Children are born, and, at the earliest age at which they can leave their mothers, are received in these houses, and are kept in them through that period when the chance of human life is least; and much the greatest number in all the houses is composed of children.

The other considerable class is composed of the aged, and the infirm, either from age or accident. The chance of life, in this class, is small indeed.

Such are the different situations of the inmates in a house of industry: very few poor, between the age of fifteen and fifty, are seen there, except diseases, accidents, infirmities, or particular irregularities of life, have occasioned them to be sent there.

The chance of life, to people in these situations, and of these ages, under the pressure of penury, although not absolutely chilled by the cold hand of extreme poverty, would, in their miserable cottages, be small indeed.—Is that chance diminished or increased by going into a house of industry?

Is the chance of human life increased or diminished by being brought from an unwholesome starving diet to wholesome moderate plenty; from nakedness to clothing; from filth to cleanliness; from cold to warmth; from the noisome contagion of a filthy cottage,

tage, or parish-work-house, to a healthy air, free from noxious effluvia? Surely, the answer to these questions would, at once, determine the point, did it depend on theory alone.

But it may be said, the question has been tried by the touchstone of experience; one single page of which, honestly recorded, goes farther towards proof positive, than volumes of theoretic reasoning; we must therefore have recourse to this best of demonstrations.

The validity of this observation must be allowed, were the facts produced, of mortality in houses of industry, capable of being compared with the deaths of people under similar circumstances, and of similar ages, at large.

In Naſton house of industry the number of poor admitted the last fourteen years are 2017; the number of deaths, 384; the annual average of inhabitants is therefore 144; of deaths, 27.

In Bulchamp house of industry, the number admitted since the institution, in 1766 to 1793, twenty-seven years, 5207; the number of deaths, in that time, 1381: but, in the years 1781 and 1782, a putrid fever carried off one-third of the inhabitants of Blithburgh, and 217 of the inhabitants of this house; therefore, those two years should be omitted in the comparative statement: the numbers will then stand, of inhabitants, admitted in 25 years, 4725; of deaths, 1064: or, annually, inhabitants, 189, deaths, 42.

Oulton house of industry. Number of inhabitants, on an average, annually, about 150 the last six years; of deaths, for the same period, annually, 11.

Shipmeadow house of industry. Number of poor, about 200 annually; number of deaths, about 20 in a year.

Melton house of industry. Number of poor in the house, from 230 to 240; the number of deaths, for the last three years, about 16 annually.

Tattingstone house of industry. Average-number of poor in the house, annually, for 23 years, 260; average-number of deaths, annually,

annually, for the same time, 33. In this computation, the three years are omitted when the small-pox and putrid fever prevailed: the deaths, in the three years when these contagious distempers were so fatal, bring the average-number of deaths up to 37 $\frac{9}{13}$ ths, as has been stated in the notices respecting the house.

Barham house of industry. Average-number of poor inhabitants, annually, for five years, as appears by the notices, 222; average-number of deaths, 42. In this house, also, the small-pox prevailed for two years, and destroyed 127 of the inhabitants; the average of deaths, otherwise, would not have been so high.

Semer house of industry. Average-number of poor inhabitants in the house, annually, from its institution, 180; annual number of deaths, 26.

Stow house of industry. Annual average-number of poor inhabitants, in the house, about 200; of deaths, annually, 24: but, in this house, a putrid fever prevailed three years, and was fatal to 163 people: the average, omitting these three years, and taking it for ten years only, is 15 in a year.

In the nine houses of industry which have been the objects of our attention, there are, constantly, one year with another, 1780 poor inhabitants, men, women, and children.

In the same houses there happen, annually, two hundred and forty-five deaths, as the number appears by the averages taken.

The number of deaths to the number of inhabitants, annually, in all the houses of industry in Suffolk is, therefore, as 1 to 7 one-third, or nearly one-seventh of the number dies every year.

It should be recalled to the reader's mind, that the inhabitants are composed of children, from birth, to the ages of 12, 13, or 14, when they are bound apprentices or get services: the chance of life in this early age is such as, in the healthiest towns, not half the number is alive at the age of 13, as appears from the tables in Dr. Price's

Supplement

Supplement to his Observations on Reversionary Payments; of old people, whose work is done; and of poor, of all ages, who, from sickness and infirmity, are unable to maintain themselves. Such being the description of paupers admitted into these houses of industry, it must again be observed that no comparison can be made between the chance of life, of such inhabitants, and of those inhabiting in cities, towns, or villages, in general; because, in the first instance, are comprized only the very young, the very old, and the infirm and diseased; and these are also poor, and of impoverished blood, and constitutions weakened by the effects of poverty; whereas the tables in Dr. Price's Supplement to his Reversionary Payments, and in the publications of other political arithmeticians, comprehend people of all ranks, orders, and situations, in life, as well the healthy and the robust as the infirm and the diseased; as well people of all classes, at those periods when the chance of human life is greatest, as at those when it is the least.

The question of the comparative chance of human life, in these houses, must, therefore, be left undetermined by any comparison with such chance in general; and, probably, the question would be more fairly tried, could a comparison be made between the mortality in the parishes incorporated, before such incorporation took place, and such mortality since, taking into the account the number of the poor of each parish who have died in the houses of industry.

The effect these institutions have had, with respect to population, might also, by means of such comparative researches, be more accurately ascertained, were it likely that such inquiries would be attended by certain information, which probably might be the case, with respect to the comparative number of deaths, by means of the parish-registers, and the books of the respective houses; but that part of the question, which respects comparative population, could

not, by any direct inquiry, be ascertained, and can only be computed from the births and burials in the parishes, which would afford, by no means, an exact result.

On the whole, this question must be left in doubt, for the present. To judge from every appearance attending the interior of the houses of industry, no one could hesitate to declare that they must tend to increase the chance of human life, and to increase the population of the districts: the same judgement must be deduced from all theoretic proofs, reasoning from probable, nay, almost necessary, consequences. But when the comparative number of the living to the dead, taken annually, appears to be only as seven one-third to a unit; or, in other words, that the chance of life, in a house of industry, is not equal to eight years; the fact strikes strongly, and occasions the judgement upon the question to remain suspended.

But still two great points are determined in their favour: they certainly tend to meliorate the morals of the poor, and they also tend to diminish the burthen of the expense attending their maintenance: that the other point is not, on experience, determined in their favour also, arises from the difficulty of acquiring every information necessary to its investigation, and from the inability of the writer to apply, with precision and certainty of proof, such facts as he had obtained: he still believes that this point will, whenever it falls under the pen of a more accurate inquirer, and an able political arithmetician, conduce also to the recommendation of district incorporated houses of industry, as tending to increase the chance of life and population.

I cannot take leave of this subject, without animadverting upon some information received respecting the dissatisfaction of the poor at the first erection of houses of industry, which broke out in riotous proceedings, and, in some instances, occasioned a great additional expense to the incorporated hundreds; the spirit of riot having proceeded so far as to pull down the buildings erected, and

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to commit other flagrant acts of outrage. It is a well-known fact, proved by long experience, that the class of people, constituting what is called a mob, is never collected and excited to mischief, but at the instigation of an individual, or some few individuals, who poison the minds of their uninformed but well-meaning neighbours: these are men generally of a class a little superior to the mob itself; they are men who mix in conversation with them at the ale-houses, at the shop-keepers, and at barbers shops; are in general interested cunning people, who, under the mask of vast humanity, tender affection, and kind regard, for their poor neighbours, instigate them to these and similar acts of outrage. Examine the situations in life, the habits, the connections, of these people, when their secret machinations are discovered by the effects of open riot and mischief, and they stand the confessed encouragers of the mob: it must strike every inhabitant upon the spot, that a trifling degree of attention to the conduct of this description of people would have demonstrated before the fact; that those very individuals would be guilty of that clandestine incitement of the mob of the neighbourhood to the very deed of riot which has been committed, and consequently it would be proper in a district, where such an incorporation is intended, to be watchful of the conduct and conversation of that description of men, whose interests will be most injured by a plan of this nature, and to oppose the effect of their conversations on the minds of the poor, by every means which prudence can devise and the laws will sanction.

Was any additional inducement wanting to recommend district houses of industry, the particular situation and temper of the times would be that inducement; the lower orders of the kingdom are now pressing on the next, and the toe of the peasant truly galls the kibe of the courtier; that relief which formerly was, and still ought to be, petitioned for as a favour, is now frequently demanded as a right; that idleness and intemperance, which formerly feared to be observed, now obtrusively presses forward to fight; the pauper is no longer

longer satisfied with his allowance, nor the labourer with his hire; the faint rumour of distant atrocities, which disgrace human nature, reaches the ear of the multitude cleansed from the blood and carnage, and assumes to them the pleasing shape of liberty and property: the only class of men who have the power to calm the rising storm are those in the middling ranks of life, and they are as much interested to preserve things as they are as any other rank in the state: property is the only solid bulwark of the nation; for, those who possess it have a natural desire to preserve it, and our laws and our constitution must stand or fall with it; besides, the danger lies immediately beneath this description of people: district houses of industry consolidate all the men of property, resident in the county, in the same laudable plan; the preservation of industry, good order, and a religious sentiment, among the million; the few gentlemen of fortune, who reside in the county meritoriously, take an active part in all the incorporated houses; the beneficed clergy resident there also do the same, and it does them honour, for it is equally their duty as their interest: so also do the more opulent yeomanry of the county, a body of men of the first consequence to the preservation of peace and order: permit, therefore, an individual, who thus freely declares his sentiments on a subject not generally understood, to assert, without the imputation of presumption or arrogance, that equally the duty as the interests of government call on them to encourage these institutions by every mode in their power; let every influence be made use of by them, and every persuasion, by men of rank and fortune, to establish houses of industry throughout the kingdom; they will present, by anticipation of the cause, a more sure barrier to the insolent attempts of sedition and the press of democratic violence, than all the barracks in Europe, and they will prove a more secure defence of liberty and property, rightly understood, than the best-disciplined standing army.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R XLVIII.

BEFORE this subject, of so much importance to us and our posterity, is finally closed; before any recapitulation is attempted of those points to which the minister of this kingdom must feel himself on every principle of duty to his sovereign, and to all ranks of his countrymen, and by every obligation of regard to his own unfulfilled reputation, bound to attend; it may be proper to suggest that the code of poor-laws, which regulates the conduct of upwards of seven millions of his majesty's subjects, is a vague, unconnected, inconsistent, piece of patch-work, in which there is no nicety of workmanship, no dove-tail exactness of joinery: but the original statute of the 43d of Eliz. stands, like some other elegant pieces of gothic architecture in this kingdom, exposed to the eyes of taste and criticism, with a prop in one place, an addition in another; each prop and addition, necessary, most probably, to support and render useful the original building, somewhat weakened by the flux of time and the alteration of circumstances; but certainly not conducive, in the manner they have been added, to elegant appearance of the whole of that structure, whose foundation, being in times past bottomed in humanity, justice, and policy, will reflect to ages yet unborn a credit on that country which laid the foundation, and reared the humane and necessary, although at present expensive, incompetent, and unsightly, superstructure.

Our highways were a few years ago managed and the conduct of them regulated by acts of parliament, collected from different parts of the code of statutes, in a manner somewhat similar to our poor-laws; but not so diffused over a legislation of centuries; nor a tenth part so intricate in their investigation and application; nor a thousandth part so important in their effects on the happiness of the multitude: but a steady light has been thrown on those laws,

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by reducing them under one plain intelligible act; and the roads throughout the greatest part of the kingdom are become good, without the inhabitants feeling any considerable expense; that *lucidus ordo*, which has done so much on our highways, would also do good in the cottages of the poor, in the vestries of our churches, and on the benches of our magistrates; and it is a self-evident truth, that a system of legislation, by which all the subjects of England and Wales are to be guided, and on which no inconsiderable part of their property, happiness, and comfort, nay, possibly, the existence of many thousands of them, depend, should be plain and explicit; that those who run may read, and that all who read may understand: this is to be effected in a plain and intelligible manner, in one comprehensive act, preserving the 43d of Elizabeth as the citadel, and the necessary additions to, or explanations of, it as outworks.

Another preliminary observation is also necessary: — whatever may be the rule laid down by the legislature for the conduct of the nation with respect to the poor, it should partake of the nature of municipal law; it should enforce what is right, and prohibit what is wrong; and, if right must be enforced, and wrong prohibited by penalties, those penalties should not appear in the statute-book only, but in the revenue raised for the maintenance of the poor; they arise from nonfeasance or misfeasance; both of them diminishing the revenue of the poor, or wasting it when raised: as soon as the sore is felt should the salve also; this may be done; not by subjecting the administration of the poor-laws to a new category of penalties, but by making the old the immediate and unavoidable consequence of the offence; by these means would the poor-laws be well executed, or the revenue raised for the poor be increased by the neglect of its managers: without some specific plan of this kind, every new regulation will only be a new stumbling-block, and will bring an increase of expense, not of revenue.

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A minister who wishes to make use of the height of his power and authority, to alleviate the miseries of the poor, and save his country from a long ruin, impending from that very alarming quarter, must for a time divest himself of the thirst of popular fame; or at least he must emulate a famous character of antiquity; must be *smitten* with the love of that popularity which follows, not that which is followed. The present critical situation of the kingdom, with respect to foreign politics, may be suggested as a fearful, or at least an imprudent, time, to attempt much regulation at home; but the regulation which is wanted is in favour of the million; in favour of their liberty; in favour of the revenue raised for their maintenance; in favour of the general industry of the mass of his majesty's subjects: it is to their ease; to their comfort; to the more comfortable maintenance of themselves, their fire-sides, and families, this regulation tends. Whom will it affect in a contrary light? not people of rank; not people of property; not the honest; not the industrious; not the active: — but, if it did, those of this description feel they had rather take the lesser ill, than run a risk of undergoing the greater; they had rather part with a trifle than lose all. But whom would this strictness of discipline in these instances affect? the idle, the lazy, or the dishonest, only. And can a minister of state either fear the opprobrium of these; or care whether he preserves his popularity among them? No, he will answer, with the same great character of antiquity just alluded to: *si qua est invidia in conservanda republica suscepta, lædat invidos, mihi valeat ad gloriam.*

Permit me to dwell a little longer on this topic; permit a few egotisms to escape my pen without tainting the writer with the reputation of arrogance or presumption. I have acted some years as a magistrate, and am conscious, that, from neglect and inattention, I possibly may have been the cause, either that the revenue belonging to the poor in my neighbourhood has, in some instances, been neglected in raising, or diminished by improper application: these are faults, venial undoubtedly; but they are such, as had a penalty

attached itself inevitably to each omission of, or inattention to, duty, somewhat more would have been gained by the poor in increase of revenue, or decrease of expenditure; because, either my pride or my parsimony, disliking the record of the inattention, or the payment of the penalty, my duty would have been done with superior attention. In a similar manner I should conceive other magistrates and overseers of the poor would feel in similar instances; if so, undoubtedly would the execution of the poor-laws be enforced by these means with greater strictness of discipline; and many thousands of pounds be saved to such of his majesty's subjects as contribute to the maintenance of the poor; and, possibly, some thousands of lives of the poor themselves might be snatched from an untimely end.

If slight penal consequences, following instances of neglect, with the same unnerving certainty as the night follows the day, would have a good effect on the execution of this code, what should prevent such regulation taking place? a fear lest magistrates should be deterred from taking the *dedimus potestatem* upon themselves is the answer: but no such fear ought to be admitted; there is no occasion for it; the insertion of a name in the commission of the peace is now frequently solicited as an honour, and the lord-lieutenants of counties are looked up to as great patrons of provincial consequence and power: but duties are to be performed, and services to be executed, by all persons placed in offices of power and consequence; and it may be depended on, that such is the thirst for authority, that the office would be solicited, although the duties of it were to be more rigorously exacted.

This idea has, already, been more fully explained, and the heads of an act of parliament, touching the subject, roughly sketched, in a pamphlet which was submitted to the attention of the public when Mr. Gilbert's Bill was before the House of Commons.* To

* Defence of the Statute, passed in the 43d Year of Elizabeth, concerning the Employment and Relief of the Poor, with Proposals for enforcing it. Sold by Debrett, and B. White and Son.

retail now, in this tract, a plan so little noticed when the topic agitated the country, would be impertinent; because, had the proposition then deserved attention, it may be supposed it would have obtained it; as it did not, the repetition of it here would be serving up a kind of *crambe recolta*, very little palatable to most readers.

But, however, the fact certainly is now as it was then. No act of the legislature can be efficient for the purpose if not executed. We may make laws for ever and for ever; they may swell the pages of the statute-book, and serve to fill up the shelves of our library, but are a mere waste of paper, words, and time, if not enforced: some means should, therefore, be invented, not to multiply our penal sanctions, but to simplify and render unavoidable the execution of our laws. Supposing that to be done, we should proceed, in the poor-laws, just as a prudent man, in his possessions and economy, who is master of a large family: he would, in the first place, make his estates derived from his ancestors as productive as possible; consequently, if he thought that the prodigality, carelessness, or knavery, of those who had been in possession of them in past times, had wasted, neglected, or disposed of, any, without having right so to do, he would attempt all legal means to recover what had been so alienated or disposed of; he would himself occupy, or let to good tenants, at improved rents, what he possessed; he would bring his children up in habits of economy, industry, and sobriety; his servants he would train to regularity, honesty, diligence, and civility; he would excuse a single act of omission of duty, but not a regular inattention to it; he would punish the vicious, and reward the deserving: and surely he would not, if he had the power to prevent it, permit an ale-house to be close at his doors: he would also expect, that the numerous members of his household, or, at least, all of them that could be spared from the necessary domestic duties of the day, (which duties he would reduce into as narrow a

compass as possible,) should attend divine service once a week at least, to return thanks to the Almighty for that state of regularity and comfortable order they have lived in during the last week, and to pray him to prolong it to another.

If those, who have it in their power, have it also in their heart, to do somewhat efficient in the code of poor-laws, they have only to extend the idea of such a family, so regulated, to the great family of the nation: the plan is plain and practicable; nay, possibly the existing code has done, as far as direction alone can go, nearly the whole business: little directory is wanting, — but, alas! too much executory.

If the different members of this prudent man's family here alluded to refuse to obey, or are negligent of executing, his orders, and his wisdom is so lulled asleep, by the ease of his temper, or the indolence of his habits, that he is averse to compulsion, the appearance of his household instantly changes; the example runs, like wild-fire, through the whole family; the peaceful scene of harmony, order, and decorum, vanishes, and he finds himself soon placed in the midst of riot, profusion, intemperance, and ruin.

To proceed to the illustration of this allusion: — our fellow-subjects, in that part of the kingdom affected by the poor-laws, are the large family, of which the legislature is the head or master. A large estate has, by the bounty of our ancestors, been given us for the maintaining our poorer brethren: whether it may be prudent to reclaim that portion of it which has, for many centuries, been diverted from its proper purposes, or whether, in fact, it is just so to do now, is a doubtful point, considering that the present possessors, and their immediate predecessors, for such a lapse of time, have enjoyed the usufructuary possession of the whole, not divided with those who, undoubtedly, at one time, had a right to a considerable portion of it; and they have so enjoyed it, neither by
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the fraud, covin, or bad faith, of themselves, or their immediate predecessors.

But, whatever may be the opinion of the nation at large, or the feelings of that respectable class of our fellow-citizens, as to these points, yet, it is taken for granted that they are *still* individually, in some measure, responsible for the religious sentiment and moral duties of that portion of his majesty's subjects, the tenth part of whose fruits and personal industry they claim as their right; and it is conceived that themselves would, were the question put to them, in general, answer, that such is their idea of the matter; therefore, would it not be proper that, where a duty arises, a power should be there given adequate to enable the performance of the duty? This might be done by an act, conferring, within their respective parishes, on the beneficed clergy, an authority, in the regulation and supervision of the poor, concurrent with, and equal to, the authority the statutes have given to magistrates within the precincts of their respective counties: such authority, in all instances of parish-relief, and in many other points, where authority confers consequence, would enable the clergyman of the parish to persuade, by strong arguments, the poor to attend some place of worship constantly, either the church, or the meeting-house of some sect dissentient from the church, if such should be in the parish, and such should be their religious tendency; and, by inducements of interest, they would be able also to regulate their moral conduct, and allure them to an industrious life: the consequence would be, better morals and more industry, which would meliorate the condition of the poor, and diminish the expense of their maintenance; while the clergy of the established church might, by these means, honourably to themselves, in the line of their clerical function, and beneficially to the present and future life of their parishioners, assist to reduce those burthenfome expenses, which now lie so heavy on the shoulders of the laity principally. This being the fact, and such their duty, if the legislature should think proper to connect
authority

authority with that duty, would not the nation have a just right to expect a beneficial consequence?

Another estate has also been left by our ancestors for the same purpose, in times long since the former, much of which it is to be apprehended is now perverted to different uses, by the knavery of some and the carelessness of others, for the recovery of which an Act of Parliament* is still in force, but not in use; this estate, therefore, ought not to be lost to the purposes for which it was left, nor ought the act of parliament to become a dead letter, but rather an active instrument to wrest these estates from the grasp of the present unlawful possessors.

The third part of their revenue has been raised for their support and maintenance nearly two hundred years, and has, like the young disease of the poet,

“ Grown with our growth, and strengthen'd with our strength.”

This is certainly raised with strictness, and expended with carelessness. In the increment of this part of their revenue, nothing more ought to be done, too much having been done already; but, in the application of it, much reform may be made. Here then is another point to which the attention should be applied.

The last, but not the least, proportion of their revenue arises from their individual industry and labour: here again ought the attention to be fixed as to an object of the utmost importance, involving in itself a multitude of considerations; but they may be reduced under a few general ideas.

A man of sober and regular mode of life, of good moral and religious principles, is more likely to acquire property by hard labour than one of a contrary description; and the consequence, which results to an individual, results also to a million, keeping the quantity

* Statute of Charitable Uses, 43d Eliz.

of work done, in a progressive state, *pari passu*, with the number: therefore, if a man, of regular habits of industry, will earn 20*l.* per annum, twenty millions will be earned by a million: if, on the other hand, the individual loses five pounds a year by idleness, and spends five pounds in drink, the million will produce towards their maintenance ten millions less; the conclusion which follows from the premises is so plain, that a recapitulation would be superfluous.

Thus are the moral and religious duties of the mass of mankind essential objects of attention to the interests of finance as well as to the public good; and it is not, in many instances, that so remarkable a coalition can be pointed out. Supposing, therefore, this important object to be attended to, we will proceed to the next.

The price at which labour is done follows of course; and here the golden maxim should be again repeated,—"the labourer is worthy of his hire." When these pages were first entered upon, the prevailing idea of the writer, excited possibly by a near view of human misery, was, that the labourer had not his hire; or, in other words, that his hire would not produce him the necessaries of life, which it ought to do, and some of the comforts also: the same doubt still prevails in some instances, but they are exceptions only, not being sufficient in number to form a general rule, and principally are apparent in manufactures, when the demand for the commodity is likely to be, or is actually, diminished by war or other unavoidable causes; although it is certain, that, on a different principle and from a different cause, have manufacturers diminished the prices of labour, viz. to increase the *quantum* of labour to be performed: this they have done with equal precision of logical inference, as dereliction of moral principle; reasoning in this manner:—A man must earn a certain sum to support his family a certain time: diminish his wages in piece-work a given time, and the quantity done in the time will be increased, or his family will be in want, which he will not suffer while his industry can prevent it. By these means we kill two birds with a stone, we gain by sup-
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plying the demand, and we gain by decreasing the price of labour: so have reasoned the manufacturers; but the principle on which they, when reasoning thus, supposed the poor man to act, is now almost worn out; he will apply to the parish rather than work harder to make up his usual earnings; therefore, in such instances, when they happen, manufacture literally preys upon agriculture.

On the other hand, in agriculture these circumstances cannot occur; the demand for labour is constant, and nearly the same throughout the year; nothing, therefore, but individual instances of avarice in the employer are necessary to be here guarded against in defence of the poor and their rights, as far as the principle "The labourer is worthy of his hire" extends; for, it has been proved in these pages, that he in general is paid in these days by agriculture, in full conformity to the maxim, "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

The obsolete laws with respect to justices rating the wages of labourers in agriculture, at their quarter-sessions, therefore need not be revived, at least the interests of the poor do not require their execution; nor indeed were they ever intended to raise so much as to depress the price of labour; *whether it may not be necessary for the interest of agriculture, to regulate the maximum-price of labour, so as to preserve some proportion between work and price in its extreme, is worth the consideration of those who calculate at what rate corn may be afforded to be sold, leaving the farmer a fair profit.*

The law of settlements, and the consequences flowing from it, occasion an enormous draft on the poor's rate, and diminish that part of their revenue which arises from their labour, by restraining them from going where they could make the most of it. It is probable, if these laws were repealed, preserving at the same time, or enacting anew, such restraints as tend to prevent vagrancy, the labour of the poor might be considerably more productive; and they would enjoy a degree of freedom they have a right to expect from society, if not inimical to peace and good order: but this must be
touched

touched with a tender hand. The act of parliament respecting friendly societies, which passed the last session, may possibly be found, by the experience of time, to do all that need be done on the principle of increasing labour, by increasing the facility of choosing a residence; yet it is a doubt, whether we ought to wait for this probable, but distant, consequence.

Nothing will do so much in this point as early industry. Can it be supposed, that a generation of industrious adults will arise from a race of idle children? Is the adage of the poet so falsified by experience, as to prove that the tree will be inclined reversely to the bending of the twig? Unless we conceive persevering industry and a life of hard labour will be taken up, and the habit continued with equal readiness and facility as our necessary repasts and hours of repose, we act against our conviction, by expecting the man to be industrious, who, when a boy, was permitted to live in idleness. Schools of industry would effect much good in this respect, and an application of some part of the poor's rate to this purpose is in union as well with the letter as with the spirit of our poor-laws.

Houses of industry appear from the review which has been had of the general theory respecting them, and also from the inspection of such as are situated within that county which first made the experiment, to tend to every good end: they, by the means of sound morality, religious duties, good order, economy, and sobriety, make the revenue arising from the industry of the poor more productive, and expend less in their maintenance; at the same time, that maintenance is the result of an union of cleanliness, decency, and wholesome plenty; the reverse of what we see in the cottage; the reverse of what we see in the parish work-house. But it is much to be feared these houses of industry must be allowed, from the visibly good effects of them apparent to the sensible part of the nation, to take their stations slowly in the land, and cannot, with safety, be obtruded on our countrymen by the *flat* of the legislature.

When youth has been trained to labour by habit, and that habit has been encouraged by rewards, the honorary and lucrative spur should not cease; nor should young people, so educated, be permitted to remain stationary, possibly to become retrogressive, from the incitement being removed in maturer life, of which they have experienced the effect in earlier days. Much more can be done by rewards than punishment, and the code of poor-laws at present holds out nothing but punishment; departing far from the principles of divine retribution, which, while it threatens with tremendous punishment the bad, offers eternal rewards to the deserving.

The mode and the means of following so excellent an example have been hinted at, and possibly the effect may be greater than the imagination can conceive. To corroborate this idea, something may be collected from amidst the mass of human miseries which now lays waste a neighbouring country: the French troops are undoubtedly brave, persevering, and determined; ignominy, together with the up-lifted axe, strike their attention on the one hand; rewards, suiting their enthusiastic ideas, or relieving their extreme poverty, on the other. God forbid that our fellow-subjects should ever feel the impulse to a discharge of duty from the uplifted axe! It is equally to be wished that they may experience the incitement from the fostering hand of reward.

But neither punishments will intimidate from wrong, nor will rewards allure to right, while seduction, in the semblance of articles of excise, strides, with an unbounded step, through this devoted country; while the financier and the moralist, the pulpit and the treasury, are at variance; and the defalcation of revenue, by a decrement of drunkenness, is more dreaded by the government than bad morals and a dissolute people. If ale-houses must preserve their ubiquity, if the village must, by means of these hot-beds of seduction, partake of the vices of a populous town; the populous town of an overgrown metropolis; because the treasury-coffers require replenish-

replenishing, in vain are all our endeavours to preserve morality; she will disappear from among us, and debauchery, with his companions, will take her place: it has been the case; it is so now; and the effects are visible throughout the land; although the remote, but certain, consequences are not attended to. Here should the determined patriot strike; at this he should aim the shafts of his eloquence, not at a change of political party, making an invective on political measures the means; all nonsense to the million; who, whatever administration rules, must live, and ought to live comfortably. Let the true patriot give them the chance of living soberly, by exciting the legislature to remove, from their too easy grasp, the temptation to vice: that being done, they will live industriously, and become a benefit, not a burthen, to the community.

Such are the principal objects which ought to strike the attention of the patriotic statesman as he surveys the vast horizon which the view of our poor, their rights, duties, and the laws respecting them, offers to his contemplation. If what has been advanced in these pages has the good fortune to point out any leading feature in the landscape to his notice, and society itself, or the poorest individual in it, receives any benefit from such an incitement of his attention, the purpose of the writer has been answered, — he has not employed himself in vain.

L E T T E R XLIX.

THE legislature gave its sanction to no general act respecting the poor, from the time that Mr. Gilbert's plan met its fate, as has been mentioned, until the session of parliament which was held in the year 1793; except that, by the last clause to an act

passed in 1792, to explain and amend the Vagrant-Act, it was enacted, that, if it shall be made appear to two justices of the peace that any poor person shall not use proper means to get employment, or, if he is able to work, by his neglect of work, or by spending his money in ale-houses, or places of bad repute, &c. he shall not apply a proper portion of his earnings to the maintenance of his wife and family, and they shall become chargeable to their parish, he shall be deemed an idle and disorderly person, and punished as such.

By 33 Geo. III. c. 35. some alterations were made in the act passed, in the twenty-second year of his present Majesty, for the better relief and employment of the poor; but, in the mean time, many districts and parishes had, individually, applied for, and obtained, acts of parliament for incorporating themselves, and managing their own poor, in a manner different from that established by the statute-laws of the realm.

It has been remarked, in a preceding letter, that but few, if any, parishes had taken the benefit of, and carried into execution, the plan formed by Mr. Gilbert in the statute alluded to; and a reason for that peculiarity has been suggested: but, by the bill passed this session, it appears, that all the clauses in that act were not so perfect as to leave nothing in uncertainty; and that the wording of one or two of them, for want of necessary technical precision, might involve the parishes incorporating themselves in disputes and lawsuits. It was enacted, "That two-thirds, in number and value, of persons qualified, according to the recited act, who shall attend at any public meetings, and signify their approbation of the provisions of the act, shall be a sufficient compliance with the recited provision." This amendment was intended to prevent those who did not choose to attend the meetings afterward coming forward, and opposing the measure when the parishes had incurred an expense.

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The second clause is, to enable the two-thirds of the owners and occupiers of land to recommend two guardians of the poor, if they shall be of opinion that one will not be equal to the duty.

The third clause is, to enable all the parishes uniting to relieve their casual poor, conjointly, and in the same proportion as they are directed to contribute for the general purposes of the said act.

These were certainly necessary amendments to the twenty-second of Geo. III. c. 83. But the objections pointed out by Sir F. M. Eden, in the first volume of his *History of the Poor*, page 366, are not so obvious.

He says, — That few incorporations of parishes have taken place under the act is not to be wondered at, when it is considered that, “although it empowers the parishes uniting to borrow money, on the security of the poor-rates, it directs, that the persons sent to the poor-house shall be maintained at the general expense of the parishes uniting.

Section 24, of this act, undoubtedly so directs. And it says, “according to the terms and in the proportions directed and prescribed by this act.”

I must confess myself unable to see any objection to this clause. The poor sent to the house are maintained by the consolidated fund formed of the poor's rates of the incorporated parishes, or for which those rates are mortgaged, and, of course, the poor in the house must be maintained at the general expense of the parishes uniting, as they must be maintained out of that fund: and I am more induced to think that no solid objection has appeared to this clause, because it escaped the notice of those applying for the amendment in 1793: neither can much doubt remain on the minds of magistrates with respect to the sending children of the poor to the house under the 30th section of this act.

It says, that all infant-children of tender years, and who, from accident or misfortune, shall become chargeable, may be sent, &c.

“But,

“ But, if the parents or relations of any poor child sent to such house shall desire to receive and provide for such poor child, and signify the same to the guardians, at their monthly meeting, the guardians shall, and they are hereby required to, dismiss such child from the said poor-house.” — “ Nothing herein-contained shall give any power to separate any child, or children, under the age of seven years, from their parents, without the consent of such parents.”

I should conceive the meaning of this clause to be, that all infant-children who shall become chargeable may be sent to the poor-house; but, if the parents or relations of a child so sent shall apply to the guardians, at a monthly meeting, they may take their child out again to provide for it; and that children under the age of seven years shall not even be *sent* to the poor-house without the leave of the parents. The argument, at the sessions at Kingston, the learned baronet rightly observes, turned on a different point.

Rather later in this session, by chapter 54, were the friendly societies within the kingdom put on a new, secure, and respectable, footing; and an institution which originated voluntarily among the best-conditioned of the mass of his majesty's subjects, earning their subsistence by their daily labour, and which was calculated, as it respects themselves, on every principle which can do credit to a human being, whose sole patrimony is his ability to labour; and, as it respects their countrymen, from whom the poor-rate is taken, with a laudable intention to relieve them from the burthen which might be laid on them by the infirmities and accidents of life the subscribing-members are subject to, and to set a good example of economy and prudence to their fellow-labourers; received, by the means of the zealous and unceasing attention of Mr. Rose to every matter which respects the interests of this kingdom, a stability from the legislature, which gave, to what was before the passing of this act, an airy nothing, a local habitation, and a name: but, as the
act

act itself has been commented upon at large, in a former letter, the heads of it shall not be again repeated.

In conversation very lately with a gentleman high in office in the Court of Chancery, on the subject of the poor, he expressed his general approbation in strong terms of this act; but observed, that his situation gave him proofs of the inconvenience attending one of the clauses, which enacts that treasurers, &c. shall render accounts and pay over balances: “And, in case of neglect or refusal to deliver such account, or to pay over such moneys, or to assign, transfer, or deliver, such securities or funds in manner aforesaid, it shall and may be lawful for every such society, in the name of the treasurer or trustees thereof, to exhibit a petition in the High Court of Chancery, or the Court of Exchequer, or the Court of Session in Scotland, or the Courts of Great Sessions in Wales, which shall and may proceed thereon in a summary way, and make such orders thereupon, on hearing all parties concerned, as to such court in discretion shall seem just. And, by sec. 9. no fee, reward, emolument, or gratuity, whatsoever, shall be demanded, taken, or received, by any officer or minister of that court for any matter or thing done in pursuance of this act.” He also remarked, that, if this had been left with the quarter-sessions, it would have saved the parties much time and expense, which unavoidably were incurred from the application to the higher courts, although no costs could be given; and, as that was the case, the treasurers, &c. might continue, and had continued, their refusal until attached by the process of the court for contempt.*

It appears, from the very able treatise on the police of the metropolis by a magistrate, that upwards of seventy thousand

* This observation has certainly much truth in it; and it is to be lamented, that the matter had not been considered in time, to have introduced a clause to that purpose in the act which passed 35 Geo. III. c. 111. which extends the powers of the Friendly-Society Act.

families are benefited, by the heads of them being members of friendly societies, within the bills of mortality. Page 166.

The same very intelligent magistrate informs us, in a note to page 164, that it is estimated, in the present extended and improved state of the metropolis, there are 162,000 inhabited houses, supposed to contain about 240,000 families, including lodgers of every description, residing in nearly 8000 streets, lanes, alleys, courts, and squares.

It is supposed, that this number of families is not confined to the bills of mortality; therefore, no exact comparison can be made between the number of families benefited by the friendly societies, and the number of families inhabiting within the bills of mortality, by the information derived from this author; but we also find in the same publication, under the article Institutions for Charitable Purposes, 600 friendly societies in the metropolis and its vicinity now incorporated by act of parliament, composed of mechanics and labouring-people, who distribute to such as are members, and for funerals, 36,000 *l.* a year, raised by monthly payments.

Although no precise comparison can be drawn from this information between the number of poor inhabitants in the metropolis and its vicinity, and the number benefited by friendly societies, still enough appears, if the information be correct, to convince us that a large proportion of that class of inhabitants, who are likely to be at some time in their lives a burthen on the poor-rates, does already partake of the benefit of these societies in London and its vicinity: probably, nearly as great a proportion is benefited by them in the country. If such be the fact, or in proportion with the extent of such a fact, any encouragement, compatible with prudence, that may tend to spread the good arising from them still wider among the mass of our population, must be productive of general benefit; as it will tend to supersede, or render needless, any measure to introduce a similar effect, under the form of a parochial fund; which, however excellent in its theoretic principle, will, it is feared, if it
arises

arises not from a voluntary principle, be attended with too large an expence, and too lax an attention of those concerned in its execution, to be ultimately effective.

There is undoubtedly a selfish, but yet a prudent, principle attending these friendly societies, which excludes all those who are not likely to become profitable members; the aged, the infirm, the maimed, cannot hope to be admitted by ballot; it is not to be expected, that those, carrying about with them certain indications of the present want of assistance, should willingly be received into a society on payment of a small periodical sum, which will entitle them to that assistance of which they apparently, at present, stand in need; while the general appearance and real situation of the members of these societies indicate sound health and ability to labour. The legislature cannot think of opening the door of these societies wider than the individual rules of them admit, for the purpose of taking in a description of men different from such as those rules point out; consequently, a certain description of poor will never be benefited by them, unless some means could be invented to proportion the price of admission, and the *quantum* of periodical payment, to the apparent state of health, and ability to work, of the person proposed, still leaving the matter optional on the part of the society: in that case, it might be a good speculation for the parish to pay the expence.

Whether, for the purpose of giving these unhappy men a rest from their labour, and a prospect in the decline of life of something better than the workhouse, any other institution on similar principles should be established by authority of the legislature, is a matter of no small difficulty to determine: to take from those, who, from their disability to do much work, can earn but little, any periodical, although small, portion of their earnings, with a view to an advantageous return of it in the shape of weekly allowance, when their diseases increase and old age presses on them, and to give them a certain weekly parochial assistance, whether in proportion to the

number of their children, or to the actual pressure of their prevailing infirmity, that they may be able to pay a certain sum periodically for this purpose, is somewhat like taking from Peter to pay Paul, and that, also, at the expense of considerable trouble, arising from the necessity of keeping accounts of some degree of intricacy.

There is, also, another class of the poor, whose comforts are chiefly negative, but whose misery is strikingly affirmative, where the eye of humanity must see much ought to be done, but where, probably, prudence will allow of but little alteration; I mean the women, whether wives or widows, of the labouring-poor, and those, also, who pass their lives in celibacy. Their oppressed situation, particularly of the married women, shall be the topic of the next Letter.

L E T T E R L.

THE farther we recede from civilized society, and the nearer we approach to savage life, the more wretched do we find the condition of the females: it should seem from this, that, in proportion as men make use of that *as sublime* which induces them to look up to, and attempt, at a humble and infinite distance, to imitate the virtues, and render themselves worthy of the protection, of the Creator, do they sensibly feel the blessing he has granted them, in giving them, as a companion, not as a slave or an inferior, a sex, whose best energy consists in modest domestic virtues, in discharging her painful duties with submissive patience, in soothing the cares, and averting, as much as possible, the anxieties, attendant on her more active companion in his journey through human life. But it is civilization, and its concomitant, education, which elicits these best propensities, both in man and woman: in proportion

proportion as these advance, we more clearly perceive the philosophic maxim of the historian to be founded in nature and truth:—

“ *Omnis nostra vis in animo et corpore sita est, animi imperio corporis servitio magis utimur; alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum belluis commune est.*”

These ideas press themselves on my mind by the recollection of that train of disagreeable sensations which has too often been occasioned by the discharge of the duties of a magistrate situated in this part of the kingdom, and subject to applications by the poor for an order of relief: frequently have those applications been made by females, and happy must he have felt himself when the laws have permitted him to relieve their distressing complaints of want of food or clothing. This could not be the case when mothers of large families of infant-children, the wives of lazy, depraved, and brutish, husbands, have, with all the pathos of truth and diffidence, related the starving miserable condition of their children and themselves, attempting, at the same time, to conceal, or explain away, the cruel conduct of their lazy or improvident husband. I will venture to say, many magistrates have heard of, and known that there existed, such instances of distress arising from the bad conduct of husbands and fathers of families, as would appear, if in print, to those of the rich, who know but little of the miseries of the poor, scarcely to be within the pale of probability in this kingdom, and have been obliged to dismiss the suppliants, hopeless of relief from the poor's rate, by informing them *their husband* must apply to the overseers for relief: if they refuse *him* relief, *he* may then apply to the magistrate. Alas! their husbands, conscious of their imprudence, their drunkenness, or laziness; conscious, either that they earned sufficient to support their families, but spent it in an ale-house, or that they were lazy and had refused work, would not apply to the overseers, and all order for relief from the magistrate was stopped. In some instances, interference has done mischief, and the overseer has been *desired*, not *ordered*, to relieve: it has been

complied with : he has then applied for a warrant against the husband, as an idle and disorderly person, by virtue of 32 Geo. III. sec. 45. he has been sent to the house of correction, as such, for a short time ; has returned *punished*, but not *reformed* ; and has added, to the former neglect of his wife and family, cruelty and ill-usage, looking on her complaint as the cause of his punishment.

Another bad custom has, of late, been in practice among the class of labourers : the appropriating a small proportion of his week's earnings for the maintenance of his wife and family, and expecting her and his children, who are at home, and probably unemployed, to find the rest. The consequence arising from this has been, that every child, from the youngest that can creep about to those of maturer age, girls especially, are lurking about the fields and farm-yards all day, stealing whatever they can come at : the girls soon lose all sense of modesty and propriety of conduct, and become, at a very early period of life, initiated in all debauchery : for it is experience that informs us, those who, from their bad conduct and character, have not been able to get away from their families into service, or some separate establishment, but still continue to earn a livelihood at home by doubtful means, are astute and zealous in seducing their younger neighbours, by information how themselves have found means to obtain better fare or more finery.

The laws respecting property militate greatly with the common interest among the lowest orders of society : — that principle which gives the *femme coverte* no right to personal property, but vests the whole in the *husband*, not only occasions innumerable instances of aggravated distress, but appears to be repugnant to the general good. How many families might, and would, be saved from destruction, had the wife but a right to what she could acquire ! Industry and economy stand in need of this natural incitement : — that the industrious and economic should possess a property in what their industry and economy have obtained or saved.

Another

Another circumstance would originate, from this proposition, favourable to individual comfort and to the general good : we might then see friendly societies of females which would assist them in the time of labour and sickness, and, while they are suffering under the painful lot the sex is heir to, some drops of comfort might then be mixed in their cup of affliction. While this assertion is ventured, let it not be imagined that any material alteration in the general law of property, as it may affect married women, is recommended, or that, indeed, any change is hinted at, any farther than what tends to secure, in the lowest ranks of society, to the woman and her infant-children, a right to some proportion of the earnings of her partner and her own, which may ensure them from starving while the husband is at the ale-house. In a former part of this work, the infinite mischief done to morality, to economy, to industry, to the health, and, of course, to the political prosperity, of the kingdom, by these licensed promoters and receptacles of every vice disgraceful to human nature, has been sufficiently dwelt on : if they must still remain the glaring opprobrium of our religious and moral government, we must be satisfied to pay back, in the shape of relief, to the mothers and children of starving families, out of our pockets, some portion of that revenue which is collected by means of this mistaken policy of the state.

Sir F. M. Eden, among the mass of information collected in the second and third volume of his *History of the Poor*, has given, under the title "Parochial Reports, Carlisle," an instance of a female friendly society, and specified some of their rules ; and, at Lancaster, has briefly given an account of five societies of a similar kind, but has not made such deductions, from the information he has collected, as might have proved the quantum of good, society in general, or the members themselves individually, may be likely to receive from these female institutions, while man remains the lord and master of whatever property his wife may possess.

Was

Was the legislature to encourage these institutions, by giving the wife a right to such property as may accrue to her as a member of one of these societies, still the husband, by withdrawing his assistance, and expecting that the allowance received from these societies should save a proportion of his earnings, which must, otherwise, be applied towards her maintenance in child-bed, would still leave his wife in as bad a situation as ever, and no great good would arise: it is difficult to say what should be done; and, while the mind is in that state of uncertainty, good sense will say—do nothing.

L E T T E R L I.

EARLY in the year 1794, I first had the honour of a conversation with Mr. Rose on the poor-laws: he then pressed me to give my attention immediately to the subject; and, as soon as possible, to send him my sentiments in writing, accompanied with a sketch of what, on the whole, would be most advisable, in my opinion, to proceed first upon. In consequence of this request, within a few days, I sent him the following two memoirs, accompanied with a letter; and also, by his recommendation, sent a copy of the History of the Poor to Mr. Pitt, with an offer of my best services.

Memoir I. By 43d Eliz. c. 2. sec. 2. the church-wardens and overseers shall, within four days after the end of their year, and other overseers are nominated, make and yield up, to two justices, a true and perfect account of all sums by them received, or rated and assessed, and not received; and also of such stock as shall be in their hands, or in the hands of any of the poor, to work; and of all other things concerning their office.

And also, by sec. 4. any such two justices may commit to prison any one of the said church-wardens and overseers which shall refuse

fuse to account ; there to remain, without bail or mainprise, until he has made a true account.

And, by 13 Geo. II. c. 38. the same officers shall yearly, within fourteen days after other overseers shall be appointed, deliver up to the succeeding overseers a just account in writing, fairly entered in a book to be kept by them for that purpose, and signed by them, of all sums of money by them received, or rated and not received, and also of all materials that shall be in their hands, or in the hands of any of the poor, to be wrought, and of all money paid by such church-wardens and overseers so accounting, and of all other things concerning their office ; which account shall be verified on oath before one justice, who shall sign and attest the same, at the foot of the account, without fee.

By virtue of these authorities, two justices issue their precepts to the high-constables of their districts, to direct their warrants to the petty constables, to make out a list of householders to be overseers, and to return such list on a certain day ; that the justices may appoint other overseers, and also to give notices to the overseers to appear on that day to swear to their accounts.* At this meeting the high constables, as well as the petty constables, are present.

It

* A Specification of the Mode recommended for the annual Account of Totals to be laid before Parliament. — The Sums and Figures are ideal.

1796.

R E C E I P T S.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	
Suffolk, Ridbridge-Hundred, Clare.	From the late Overseers.	Charities : Specifying them.	Poor's Rates.	Labour of the Poor.	Total.
	£24 2 1	Banfon-Farm, one year, Michaelmas, £28 16 0 Goosecroft, one year, Lady-Day, £14 6 8	£448 14 2	£14 2 10	£530 1 9
		£43 2 8			

E X P E N S E S

It is proposed, that, for the purpose of the intended information, their accounts, which are now kept in a very confused manner, should be reduced under the following heads.

RECEIPTS.— 1. From the hands of the late overseers.— 2. From estates in land left for the purpose of general charity. From ditto, for the purpose of particular charities, inserting, by name or description, any charities, if such there be, which are unproductive, and the reason. From dividends of funded property, or interest of money out at use, for the benefit of the poor of the parish, if any.— 3. From assessments to the poor's rate.— 4. From the work of the poor.

DISBURSEMENTS.— 1. Application of money to county-purposes, vagrants, militia, bridges, gaols, &c. Expenses not concerning the poor, as repairing churches, roads, salaries to ministers, &c. if any.— 2. Ditto, of overseers in journeys, attendances on magistrates, &c. Ditto, of entertainments at meetings relative to the poor. Ditto, of law-orders, examinations, removals, appeals.—

EXPENSES.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
County-Rates, and Expenses not concerning the Poor.	Miscellaneous Expenses.	Workhouse, and Number of Poor therein.	Poor relieved out of the Workhouse, and Number relieved.	Schools of Industry, and setting the Poor to work.	Total.
County-rates, £38 5 4 Raising one man for navy, £31 10 0 <u>£69 15 4</u>	Overseer's expenses attending magistrates, £3 5 0 Parish-meetings, £2 2 0 Orders of removal, and law-expenses, £11 19 0 <u>£17 6 0</u>	Men . . 12 Women . 14 Children, 26 under 14 years of age, £160 12 6	Men . . 22 Women, 13 Children, 68 under 14 years of age. <i>Note.</i> These are all the children at home under 14, belonging to the families relieved. £271 11 10	No school of industry. £6 7 2	£525 12 10

Receipts - - - £530 1 9
Expenses - - - 525 12 10

Due to the parish - £ 4 8 11

3. Ditto

3. Ditto, of workhouse, specifying the number of men, women, and children, therein, under 14, taken on an average throughout the year. — 4. Ditto, of those relieved out of the workhouse by clothes, food, or money; specifying the number of men, women, and children, under the age of 14, so relieved. — 5. Ditto, in setting the poor to work.

The overseer's accounts being thus kept under separate heads, and the truth of their accounts verified on oath, of *voir dire*, to all such questions as shall be put to them, touching their accounts, and being signed by two magistrates.

The high constables shall be directed to return, to the clerk of the peace of the ensuing quarter-sessions, a true copy of the several *totals* of the receipts and disbursements in the parishes within their district, which shall be verified by oath at the quarter-sessions, by the high constable, to be a true copy; and he shall receive from the county-stock, for the account of each parish so returned, the sum of —.

That the clerk of the peace be directed to return, within — days after the quarter-sessions, in a book, a fair copy of such totals to the committee of the house, appointed for the purpose of inspecting the situation of the poor, their rights, duties, and the laws respecting them.

And that a committee of the House of Commons be appointed for that purpose.

If an act of parliament could be passed previous to the next nomination of overseers, which will this year fall very late, and the attention of the people could be excited to the subject, by the judges mentioning it on the circuit to the grand juries, or by other means, the first returns might be made to the House of Commons soon after Easter; and, by the same time on the following year, the information of two years may be obtained; which, it is apprehended, may be sufficiently ample and conclusive to form a specific plan; which, without touching the corner-stone of the poor-laws, the 43d of Eliz. may, with great probability of success, tend to

diminish the expenses of the maintenance of the poor between one and two millions annually; and, at the same time, introduce a system of morality, industry, and comfort, more congruous with their rights as men, and their duties as subjects of the British empire.

Memoir II. Since the House of Commons received the last information on the subject of the poor, which contained answers from all the parishes in the kingdom to interrogatories applied to the overseers respecting the revenue raised for the relief of the poor, and its expenditure, during the years 1783, 1784, 1785, eight complete years are passed, during which there is every reason to believe that the poor-rates have been rising, throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws, by rapid strides; in some instances doubling, in others trebling, and, in all, very considerably increasing, the then amount: the expenses attending the relief of the poor have, consequently, increased in a similar ratio.

There is also reason to fear, that the mass of human misery among our countrymen, which one might conceive would diminish in proportion as larger sums have been applied to the relief of the miserable, has not diminished, but has increased.

The information alluded to was incomplete, inasmuch as, although it told the House of Commons the sum expended, and some of the different heads of expense, it did not inform them of the number of poor relieved; an information necessary, to judge of the competence of the sum raised to the object to which it has been applied.

Nor did it inform the house of that part of the revenue, applied to the use of the poor, which arises from estates, real and personal, which have been left by will, or given for charitable purposes, throughout the kingdom, which is received and distributed by the church-wardens and overseers of the poor. This account was
attempted

attempted to be obtained by a subsequent act of parliament, but the returns were very incomplete.

No particular attention, in the information which was obtained in 1786 upon this subject, was paid to the incorporated houses of industry ; institutions which then had profited by the experience, in those districts where they are situated, of some years, and now have the experience of an additional number of years. An inquiry into their receipts and disbursements will throw some farther light on the subject.

When the proposed information shall be returned to the House, and rendered as perfect as the nature of a return to an inquiry of such magnitude and extent is capable of, it will constitute a foundation on which some propositions may be offered which will tend to meliorate the condition of the poor, and decrease the expenses of their maintenance ; some of which may now be cursorily hinted at, but not specifically dwelt upon.

By a repeal or alteration of that part of the law of settlements which restrains the poor from getting their bread where they best can earn it, at the same time taking care that such liberty shall not degenerate into vagrancy. The names of Adam Smith, Mr. Hay, Mr. Townsend, and Sir William Young, all sanction this idea.

By instituting schools of industry, on the powers already given by the 43d of Elizabeth, to set poor children to work, and by adding what other powers are necessary.

By compelling the overseers of the poor to find work for the adult.

By encouragement of box-clubs ; and by obliging the pauper who removes from his place of settlement to another parish to contribute to the box-club where he resides ; or, if there is none, or the club there instituted will not admit him, by obliging him to make a small periodical payment, while in health, towards his maintenance in time of distress, to the overseers of the poor of that parish, and to send his children to such schools of industry.

By constituting some farther control over the conduct and accounts of the overseers of the poor.

And by a reduction of the various acts relative to the regulation and relief of the poor, which now are dispersed, through a legislation of near two centuries, into one or two plain and intelligible acts, somewhat on the plan of the Highway-Acts, so that the overseer may know each article of his duty with as much ease as the surveyor.

Before the end of the present sessions of parliament, it is conceived that some plan may be digested, printed, and laid before the House of Commons, containing the outline of some such alterations in the poor-laws as have been here suggested; and it may take somewhat the form of an act, that the alterations may be considered of by gentlemen during the vacation, and that such other lights and suggestions may be offered on the subject, during the next session, as may tend to render the system of poor-laws more conducive to the happiness and comfort of the poor themselves, and less expensive to the nation at large.

L E T T E R LII.

WITHIN a few days after my return into the country, I sent another Memoir, farther explanatory of my design, to Mr. Rose, of which the following is a copy.

Memoir III. The information, expected from the Bill recommended, presses principally on three points:

1. The revenue of the poor.
2. The expenditure of that revenue.
3. The number of the poor relieved.

Therefore,

Therefore, this information, when obtained, will be a *terminus a quo*. The future good which may be reaped from a new modification of the poor-laws may be dated and estimated.

Consequently, as much exactness as can be expected from the extensiveness of the inquiry, and the ability of those who are to make a return to it, should appear in the returns of the overseers; and that exactness or deficiency may, in some degree, be made apparent, as to the articles of receipt and expenditure, by comparing the returns made to this bill with those made in the years 1783, 1784, 1785; any glaring variation, either of receipt or expenditure, being marked as an object of revision.

And, probably, an office-letter, directed, during the vacation, to the nearest magistrate to that parish where such manifest difference appears, requesting him to order the overseers to attend him with their book of accounts, to revise the totals transmitted to the clerk of the peace, and to send the account so revised to the officer appointed to receive the same, will be the shortest and most effectual means to render the returns perfect before the next session of parliament.

An annual check, or control, to be held over the overseers' accounts, by their return of those accounts to, and the inspection of, parliament, is one of the heads of regulation most likely to operate in the reduction of the poor's rate and expenditure, and the amelioration of the state and condition of the poor.

Their conduct and accounts are not subject, as the laws now stand, to the revision of any person, save individuals of the parish, who are often too much interested to wish for any revision. The magistrates, if they have the authority to swear the overseers to answer to the truth of such questions as they shall ask them touching their accounts, are not generally in the habit of the practice; consequently, their accounts may be kept in a fallacious, desultory, and equivocal, manner.

The

The reduction of the overseers' accounts under proper heads, similar to such as are, by the intended bill, made the means of obtaining the information, was mentioned, in the first Memoir, as a subject of permanent regulation; but, possibly, it will better form a part of the general systematic reform of the poor-laws, than become, at present, a permanent act.

The sketch and plan contained in the first two memoirs having been approved of, I was desired to attend Mr. Lowndes, at his chambers in the Temple, that the act of parliament I recommended might be drawn under my inspection as soon as possible, as it was intended to be immediately proposed to the House of Commons; that, if approved of by parliament, and passed into a law, the overseers might have time to make up their accounts, and return answers to the questions in the manner specified in the schedule, at the usual time of passing their accounts, before the magistrates, at the following Easter.

Accordingly the act was drawn, and I left town in the full belief that, in as short a time as might be, it would pass the two Houses; and, receiving the royal assent, it would, at the ensuing Easter, be the rule for passing the accounts of the overseers throughout that part of the kingdom subject to the poor-laws.

But other matters more pressing occasioned the measure to be postponed, and it has since been abandoned, as far as I understand, on account of the expense attending such an inquiry.

It would be presumption to assert, that sufficient information respecting this important subject is *not* already collected, and in the possession of those from whom the nation expects an amelioration of the present system of our poor-laws. A great body of information may be got together by the inquiries of individuals: each one fixing his attention on a particular point may certainly collect sufficient intelligence on that point to be able to form a general rule: it may be so done; and, if it is so done, it is well done; but, unless something of the kind has been done, it can scarcely be supposed but that general principles would be with greater certainty ascertained,
if

if the information of facts respecting the management of the poor was more complete, and that information collected and applied to establish certain principles.

For instance, was it necessary to know whether houses of industry should be encouraged or permitted by the legislature to extend themselves over a greater proportion of the kingdom than they now occupy? Let the inquiries into the state and condition of the poor in those districts where they have been established a length of time be applied, to know whether they have decreased or increased population. If they occasion population to decrease, they should not be encouraged, because it is a proof that they do not tend to the happiness of the governed: if population is progressive, the answer is in their favour in that respect. Are the manners of the poor better or worse in these districts than where no house of industry has been erected? Are fewer crimes committed, less drunkenness and debauchery in practice? Have houses of industry tended to increase or diminish the poor's rate? If it appears to be the general tendency of the information applied to this question, that the morals of the poor are more correct, that the poor's rate, where these houses have been instituted, has not advanced *pari passu* with those districts, in similar circumstances as to the kind of work the poor are employed in where there are no houses of industry, be it in general agriculture or manufactures, the answer in this respect is also in their favour; and all the declamations against them, as being dissonant to the feelings of the poor, fall to the ground; for, in districts where such measures are pursued with the poor, that population rather increases than decreases, where the moral duties are more generally attended to, fewer crimes committed, and the poor maintained at less expense. What can a legislator require more to convince him that houses of industry, in districts so regulated, are not detrimental, but an advantage, to society?

Information thus obtained throughout the kingdom, and inquiries thus applied to other leading principles respecting the poor,

would form a solid unerring basis founded on experience, on which principles of legislation might be built, which, in all probability, would be attended with the best effects.

If sufficient information is already obtained, and in the possession of those who have as well the power as the inclination to be of service to their country, on this very important point of legislation, nothing remains but to apply that information properly; and there can be no doubt but those, in whose possession that information remains, will so apply it, if they possess it; and it is not too bold an expression to assert, that the *salvation* of this country depends on its being so applied.

There is no doubt but the information received by the House of Commons respecting the years 1776, 1783, 1784, 1785, is very valuable; but it certainly is vague and diffusive, and cannot easily be concentrated so as to apply to a particular point; and, if it could, it respects the situation of the poor in those years, not in 1797. How far the questions in the memoir alluded to would tend to give annually sufficient information, that a person at a *coup d'œil* might see the precise situation of the poor in every parish of the kingdom, is not attempted to be stated; but, supposing it would not *completely* answer that purpose, there is no doubt but, with proper attention, a schedule, according to which the overseers might be directed to keep their accounts, could be formed, which would answer that purpose; and it is the measure at large these pages attempt to support, not this particular specification of it.

Before this Letter is concluded, it remains to take notice of two acts of parliament which passed in 1795; by the first of which the law of removals is considerably altered; by the other, friendly societies are farther encouraged, and their powers extended.

The 35 Geo. III. c. 101. after reciting in the preamble the 13 and 14 C. II. cap. 12. repeals so much of that act as enables justices to remove paupers *likely to become chargeable*, and enacts that no person

person shall be removed to the place of their last legal settlement until they shall have become *actually chargeable* to the parish in which they shall inhabit.

The second section also empowers any justice of the peace to suspend the order of removal, if it shall appear to him that the pauper is unable to travel, by reason of sickness or any infirmity; and that the charges incurred by such suspension shall be paid by the officers of the parish to which they are ordered to be removed, with costs; but, if such charges and costs exceed twenty pounds, an appeal lieth to the quarter-sessions. And that this act shall not alter the power of justices to punish vagabonds, except as to suspending the vagrant-pass on account of illness.

The third section enacts, "That no person, coming into any parish, township, or place, shall, from and after the passing of this act, be enabled to gain any settlement therein by delivery of notice in writing."

The fourth, That no person shall gain a settlement by paying public taxes or levies for any tenement of less than ten pounds yearly value: and, by the remaining section of this act, rogues and vagabonds are to be considered as chargeable, and may be removed; as are unmarried women with child; and, in case their removal is suspended until after birth, the child is to be deemed and taken as settled in its mother's parish.

No one but must generally approve of the principles of this act; but a question occurs on the consequences resulting from the third section, which enacts, that no person shall gain a settlement by delivery of notice, which in fact they could not, before the act, without a residence afterwards of forty days. Is notice, therefore, now necessary to gain a settlement? Does not this clause virtually repeal the necessity of notice, and leave an opportunity for a pauper to gain a settlement by a residence of forty days, by virtue of 13 and 14 C. II. cap. 12. without notice? — If it is the meaning of the statute that, by notice and residence of

forty days taken together, the pauper shall not gain a settlement, the clause ought to have expressed as much, and no doubt could have arisen : at present there appears to remain some difficulty, as to the legal meaning of the third clause.

The charges of maintenance during the suspension of the order of removal, and the costs attending the order and the removal, being saddled upon the parish to which the pauper is sent as his place of settlement, is undoubtedly right, according to the present principles of the law of settlements. But are those principles founded on the broad basis of equity?—They certainly are pregnant with inconvenience and expense.

Reimbursement, by the parish where a pauper is settled to the parish in which he has, before his removal, resided, of any sums of money that may have been expended in his maintenance or relief, is a subject which requires some discussion, as it is attended with expense and trouble, and is, in some degree, open to an expensive, if not a fraudulent, demand upon the parish, which has reaped no benefit from the labour of the pauper, by the parish which has had the advantage of his exertions, while he was capable of any. If it is an *equitable* claim, although it may increase the aggregate of expense, it may be right to sanction it; if it is *not equitable*, and it can be proved to be inconvenient and expensive, it ought not to be encouraged by the sanction of law.

It is an acknowledged principle, by the wisest politicians, that the riches of a country are in proportion to the industrious exertions of the individuals of a country, and consequently an increment of industrious population is an increment of riches. The observation applies as well to a city, a town, a village, as to a kingdom.

An individual, removing from the place where he was born, has lived in service, served an apprenticeship, or, by any means, obtained, under our present system of poor-laws, a settlement, re-
moves,

moves, from the place where he has incurred a debt of gratitude, if not a civil obligation, for the protection received, while incapable of benefiting in any considerable degree the place in which he received it, to another place, for the purpose of making the most of his time and labour: the parish to which he removes, and where he resides, receives all the benefit arising from that time and labour, and, in proportion to the number of such residents in a parish, has that parish increased in population, and individuals in it in riches. In the mean time, the parish where the labouring-man was settled, but has not resided, has reaped none, or very trifling, benefit from its parishioner: which parish then ought, in justice, to bear the expense of the maintenance of this man, when his ability to labour is diminished, and his expenses exceed his power to provide for them? There surely can be no doubt upon the question. The conclusion which naturally follows is; that it is a sufficient act of injustice to the parish in which a man is settled to send him home to be maintained, when he can no longer earn his own maintenance, without charging his place of settlement with those expenses which have arisen, to the parish which he has benefited by his labour, in consequence of this humane act of parliament which suspends his removal, while, from illness or infirmity, it is thought improper by the magistrate he should be removed.

That expenses are daily arising throughout the kingdom, by this principle of reimbursement being carried into practice, is a fact; as it is well known, from experience, that the maintenance of the pauper, after his order of removal is suspended on account of illness, is not managed, by the overseers of the parish where he remains resident, on that close scale of economy with the maintenance of their own paupers, because they know the order from the magistrate will entitle them to reimbursement; neither is the pauper conveyed to his place of settlement with that cheapness which his own overseers would be interested in attending to; and, as this
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does not arise between a *few* parishes only, but may take place between *almost fifteen thousand parishes*, as to such paupers as may not be resident in their own parishes, among a number of our countrymen liable to become chargeable, amounting, I fear, to six millions; and, it is presumed, the number of non-residents in their own parishes will increase, as the laws are more liberal in allowing of a residence in parishes not their place of settlement; the aggregate of expense saved by annihilating the reimbursement will be very considerable; and will be still a greater object, should the bill now before the parliament pass into a law.

By 35 Geo. III. c. 111. societies established before passing the act of 33 Geo. III. c. 54. for the encouragement of friendly societies, may exhibit the rules, orders, and regulations, for their government at any general quarter-sessions, before or immediately after the Michaelmas session, 1796, and such rules, so being confirmed in the manner recited in that act, shall be valid and effectual.

By the second clause, governors, directors, managers, or members, of any institutions for the purpose of relieving widows, orphans, and families, of the clergy, and others in distressed circumstances, may frame rules and present them for confirmation, in the same manner as societies established by virtue of the Friendly-Society Act.

And, by the third clause, institutions, whose rules shall be confirmed and registered, may appoint treasurers, and be in every respect entitled to the benefit of the Friendly-Society Act, and also of this act.

L E T T E R LIII.

THE summer of 1795 also introduced this kingdom to the experience of such a scarcity and extravagant price for corn, as the oldest man cannot before remember; nor has the history of the last

last centuries informed us of. The causes of and the consequences arising from this most alarming period of time, which we have now, as far as it respects the price of all kinds of grain, weathered, shall not be canvassed in the following pages, any farther than as they have affected or do still affect the poor, and the management of them.

Some lights of information may possibly be collected from the scene of distress we have lately passed; some observations may possibly be made, some facts may be stated, as a foundation for principles of legislation, on a subject respecting which, one may venture to say, there is not in the kingdom a heart so cold to the cause of humanity and of his countrymen, as not to feel an interest, and not to be willing to offer his mite of information to rescue the poor, as far as may be, from their miserable state, and the nation from its ruinous and increasing expenses on their account.

Without recurring to the numerous facts with which the public prints of the time were filled, which, if individually related or referred to, would occasion this rude sketch of the History of the Poor to emulate in bulk the history of a great nation in detail; it is presumed that some valuable truths may be collected from the whole, which, being made use of, may prevent those whose high office it is to give us laws, or to propose them, from any material deviation from what is right, in the attempt to improve the situation of the poor, by amending the system which prescribes the management of them.

The first observation which occurs is, that the impulse, occasioned by the pressure of scarcity and the high price of corn, on the minds of the people, excited in them the idea of riot and mischief, and, in many places, instigated them to the actual attempt, by taking away the corn brought to market, by threatening the personal safety of the farmers and millers, and destruction to their property; and, in some instances, by carrying those last threats into actual execution.

The facts which are stated in the prints of the time gave rise to another observation; that, in proportion as the magistracy of the country were prompt and determined in the execution of their duty, by putting the laws in force, and convincing those assembled, that their return to peaceable conduct was the only means to insure relief to them and their families, did the symptoms of riot and disorder disappear, and our indigent countrymen, by experiencing assistance from the gratuitous contributions of their more opulent neighbours, together with an allowance from the rate raised for their relief, vastly greater than any they had before experienced, or imagined that in any event they should have received, passed through this period of threatened famine and actual scarcity without any observable increase of human mortality.

A third matter, it is believed, may also be stated as a fact, that, in no instance, through any breadth of country, did the additional increase the poor received to their income, from wages, gratuitous donations, and parochial relief, approach the increased price of bread.

Another fact also shall be taken as granted, that, in proportion as rise of wages formed the principal mode in which relief was given during the times of scarcity, does dissatisfaction and disappointment now prevail either with the employer or the employed. As there are many instances in the history of this country of the mischief done by the populace from the first impressions on their minds, whether excited by the actual pressure of distress, as in those cases where dearth of provisions has alarmed their attention, as has lately happened; or from the incitements of demagogues to riot and misrule, from political or party motives; it surely is a striking truth, that, whatever can produce a more constant active inspection as to the management of the poor, and continually impress upon their minds, that the watchful eye of superior authority is ever over their interests and conduct, as well to guard those interests from being affected, any farther than direct necessity impels, from
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that influence of the seasons and times, which no human wisdom or foresight can avert; and to take care that their conduct, while suffering under that uncontrollable necessity, shall not be such as to diminish, instead of increase, the possible means of assistance. Such an inspection and control must tend to the best effects, as it would, in the late instance of scarcity, have prevented a great waste of time, when that time was more particularly valuable, and many scenes of riot and mischief; all of which, like all other natural and political inflammatory disorders, it is a much wiser measure to prevent than to stop or allay, after the fermentation is excited: the politician as well as the physician will allow this as a maxim, that it is easier to prevent than to cure a morbid affection.

The same principle is also strongly inculcated from the second observation that has been made, that a prompt attention to the rising disturbance, and a determination to execute the duties of magistracy, were attended with the best effects: but, when the populace were collected, more coercive means on the one hand, and more explanation and persuasion on the other, were necessary to dissipate the risen tumult, than magistrates, unprotected by any means of defence, were, in every case, willing or able to make use of; because, in general, a delicacy of sentiment prevails as to calling in the aid of the military, except in those cases where the disposition of the mob is notoriously riotous, their behaviour threatening and audacious, and they are in the fact of committing acts of mischief; besides, on this occasion, the urgent cause for their alarm and dissatisfaction was obvious to every man's feeling; the price of bread-corn continued rising, before the harvest of 1796, to a height hitherto unprecedented, and bearing no proportion whatever with the means which labour, by its largest wages, could procure to purchase necessary bread for a family: in many parts of the kingdom, the price of wheat amounted to above twelve or fourteen shillings the bushel, which would exhaust the whole gains of an industrious family of five or six persons, where agricultural labour is largely paid, leaving

them not a farthing for the other necessaries of life. Here then was an emergency which required the best discretion of the magistrates, who knew and commiserated the distress and alarming situation of the poor, and at the same time felt it their duty, if the voice of persuasion could not be heard, or would not be attended to, that still the peace must be preserved. From the instances of riot which occurred in that district in Suffolk, I was obliged, in the discharge of my duty as a magistrate, to attend to: I am convinced the collected populace had no conception that the existing laws, by which they were accustomed to receive relief from the overseer in their distresses, either on immediate application to him, or, being refused, by application to the magistrate, could be so expanded as to admit of an order from the magistrates for their relief, in the case then immediately pressing on their feelings and apprehensions; because, as soon as their attention could be sufficiently gained for the voice of reason to be heard, and they had been made to understand the danger they incurred by riotously assembling, with the view to overawe and alarm those who were disposed to do every thing the laws would admit of for their relief, that if they continued assembled, assistance from the military would be applied for, but that, if they dispersed and returned peaceably to their respective homes, on the following day the magistrates of the district would attend, and then every individual head of a family, applying peaceably and by himself, would undoubtedly receive from the magistrates an order for relief, proportionate to what in their opinion the urgency of the case and the individual wants of the poor person applying required; the collected mob retired from the spot to a neighbouring field, where they talked the matter over among themselves, and in a few hours all dispersed.

The next day, four or five of those most pressed by the dearth of corn, from each of the neighbouring parishes, appeared at the justice-meeting which was then held, when the overseers were recommended to provide flour sufficient for the consumption of their parishes

parishes till harvest, and sell it to the poor of their parishes at a price which would enable them to procure bread for their families by the earnings they made. And, an equal or superior price for corn taking place in the following winter, the poor then applying in a peaceable and orderly manner for relief, the overseers were then recommended to allow each poor family sixpence a head for each individual composing the family, weekly, over and above the casual relief they had before received, and were to continue to receive; which plan was carried into execution throughout the hundred, and every symptom of riot ceased, and, except in a very few instances, this was the only relief the poor in the hundred of Risbridge, in the county of Suffolk, received through the time of scarcity, after a sufficiency of wheat for the supply of the demands of the poor until the harvest in 1796 was procured, by each occupier, engaging to furnish a proportional part of the wheat he had remaining in hand at a price fixed by consent, which price was to be made good to him out of the poor's rate.

The common day's wages in this county may be stated at eight shillings a week in summer, and seven shillings in winter, before the scarcity of 1795; and, except in cases of illness or accidental infirmity, a family, consisting of a man, his wife, and three children, had, in general, no allowance from the parish: he, therefore, lived upon, and his family was supported from, his earnings, together with what his wife and children could add to them; which little, whatever it might be, I fear was not increased in the time of scarcity; but, suppose it amounted to about eighteen-pence or two shillings a week, during the time of dearth, his income was increased, by the sixpence ordered to each individual of his family, to ten shillings and sixpence a week, and by the rise of wages one shilling more, and the earning of his family makes the sum thirteen shillings or thirteen shillings and sixpence: but the quartern-loaf was risen from sixpence, its price when wheat is 12*l.* a load of five quarters, to a shilling, at 24*l.* a load; and, for some weeks, to fifteen

teen pence; for wheat was sold as high as 30*l.* a load in this county in the spring of 1796. How then could this addition to his income enable him to support his family, when the common allowance of bread, half a peck-loaf to each individual in the family, for a week, costs him from ten shillings to twelve shillings and sixpence? It should be recollected, that this computation, being made by day's wages, may be rather low, where the labour is, in general, done by the piece.

In this neighbourhood, barley-cakes and potatoes were the common substitute for wheaten bread, a loaf of which was, at times during the scarcity, bought as a treat; and wheat-flour, from which seven pounds of bran had been taken in grinding each bushel, was in common use with all, both rich and poor: some used the flour without dressing, as it came from the stones of the mill. In the northern counties of England, it appears,* that barley-bread and potatoes are the food of the poor, almost to the exclusion of wheat; or that, where wheat-flour is introduced, it forms but a small proportion of the flour that makes the loaf, rye and barley being mixed with it; therefore, the poor, in this part of the island, were, by the scarcity, reduced to live on food similar to what their countrymen in the North have been, in the cheapest times, in the constant habit of using.

The adoption of these articles of food in this part of the kingdom, at this pressing time, will, in some measure, account for the poor being able to subsist themselves and families at the time the price of wheaten bread was more than doubled, while their additional income was not increased a third, as appears by the instance taken of a family of five, which is somewhat of an average-number in a poor man's family.

This fact corroborates an assertion made, in a former part of this tract, that the increase of the expenses of the poor does not arise

* Sir F. M. Eden's History of the Poor.

so much from the increase of the price of the prime necessities of life as from other causes which have been mentioned; and, possibly, that man will, in the event, be acknowledged the real friend of the poor, and also deserve the good word of his countrymen, who points out in what those other expenses consist, and instigates the Parliament to an inquiry into the fact, and to an attempt to prevent the continuation of its excess.

Had bread preserved that proportion in the expenses of the poor which has been imagined, is it not reasonable to suppose that some of those substitutes for fine flour, which the scarcity of the times just past by had drawn all conditions of people to, the poor would have continued in the use of, with the view either to find money for the other purposes which they might wish to indulge themselves in, or to lay up something against the day of distress, or to preserve themselves from the necessity of application to the officers of the poor, or, in some instances, to secure themselves from the pressure of absolute distress, where large families receive large allowances from the poor's rate, but yet not sufficient, together with their earnings, to find them the necessities of life?

But, it is believed, no such prudential savings, in this material article of life, have, in general, been continued in the domestic economy of the poor. The present moderate price of wheat has, although other articles of their consumption have remained as expensive as ever, brought them back to their former expenditure of bread, from fine flour unmixed with barley, which has also been proportionably cheap; and potatoes have nearly, if not entirely, disappeared from their bill of fare.

L E T T E R L I V .

IT would indicate a blameable degree of apathy to those institutions, which have equally done honour to our rulers as good to that country at the helm of which they preside, were the useful attentions of the Board of Agriculture, during the time of scarcity, by recommendations of, and instructions respecting, the cultivation of potatoes, passed over without being acknowledged. This Board has been the cause of introducing, throughout the whole kingdom, the knowledge and practice of the best methods of cultivating this most useful vegetable, and bringing it into general agricultural use: such an excellent substitute for bread, in a time of scarcity, and so nutritious a root at all times, and of such important service in the nourishment and fattening all kinds of farming-stock, but particularly swine and cattle, that there is no doubt but the cultivation of potatoes will, although the prejudices of the poor against the use of them for their general food should remain, insure this country against apprehension of any degree of famine in future, as there can scarcely be found a farmer who will not raise some quantity of them for the use of his cattle, which, in cases of emergency, may become the food of man, and his cattle be subsisted as heretofore. But, at present, and through this last winter, although potatoes have been sold at the low price of one shilling, and even so low as nine-pence, a bushel; but few have been bought by the poor in this neighbourhood; while the comparative cheapness of them, at this price, to a quartern-loaf at sixpence, must be evident to every one.

The charitable munificence of our countrymen, that virtue which has more particularly distinguished Great Britain from all countries of the globe, and has gained us a character for our humanity almost at the expense of our reputation for political wisdom, was
never

never more remarkably exerted than on the late pressing occasion : but was not that portion of it which expended itself in parochial subscriptions in some measure misapplied ? As to that which privately employed itself in alleviating instances of particular distress, no observation, derogatory either to the excellent heart or sound head that dictated any of those private good acts, is hinted at. But the public subscriptions were, in general, an application of this best trait of our national character in aid of the poor's rate ; an effect which was generally perceived after the harvest of 1795 had occasioned the apprehensions of people to subside : and the high price of corn which followed, during a great part of the subsequent year, was, in general, met by an increase of the rate for the maintenance of the poor ; private charity still assisting them by every method that Charity, skilful, although secret, in her ways and means, could invent.

The rise of wages, which, voluntarily on the part of the occupiers of land, was in general a concomitant of the late scarcity, is worth our attention, as to its consequence both to the labourer and his employer ; it attended or followed the relief the poor received from public subscriptions, private charity, and the poor's rate ; and, as far as the high price of corn was the effect of any other cause than the small produce of the crops, high wages rightly accompany high prices ; or, if the price increased in a greater ratio than the produce was deficient, an increase of wages justly accompanied an increase of profit : but, if the price arose solely, or principally, from the deficiency of produce, and was not increased by extraneous means ; augmented wages, if not voluntary, would be an injustice to those employing the poor ; because, in that case, deficiency of produce occasioning the increase of price, no extra-profit would remain for the occupier ; but he, having an increased poor's rate to pay, and his family to maintain from the decreased produce of his lands, would find himself in a worse situation than

any of the various classes of commercial men in this country, whose capital and time are not employed in raising food for man.

This is mentioned to point out one of the consequences attendant on any plan, constituting a ratio between the price of corn and the price of work; to demonstrate that in the proportion wages of agriculture rise, as there is a deficiency of crop; while the poor-rate remains as a revenue for the poor in times of distress, issuing, in a great measure, immediately from the pockets of the occupiers of land; it is an unnecessary act of injustice to them, that the means of producing the diminished produce should, at the same time, be accompanied with an increase of expense; because an increase of wages is not called for on the principle of necessity, the poor's rate obviating the necessity.

But an increase of wages is always attended with a decrease of labour. Manufacturers have long understood this fact, and acted accordingly: every person employing workmen, where labour alone, and not the skill of the artist, is required, finds the truth of this assertion from experience: the labouring-class, in general, thinks no farther than of immediate maintenance: their own labour supplies a part of this; the parish-rate is too often looked at for the remainder, and no man prefers labour to idleness, or the interests of his more opulent parishioners to his own ease; he will not work to diminish the poor's rate; it is therefore found, that increased wages do not increase either the quantity or the quality of the work done.

And when wages are raised, as they have been of late voluntarily, on account of the emergency of the times, to keep up a certain ratio between the price paid for the exertions of labour, and the maintenance of the labourer, which was humanely, but not wisely, submitted to; are they easily reduced, the emergency ceasing, and a time of cheapness, as to that produce of the earth, on account of the dearness of which the wages of the labourer were raised, having ensued? which cheapness then falls with double weight on
their

their employers ; poor's rates and wages being risen, and the price of the produce of the earth being reduced.—Inquire into the fact : — the answer will be, it has not in general been attempted : in those instances, where the attempt has been made, it has created dissatisfaction, and, where persisted in, has occasioned less work to be done ; and this, although it may be apparently a paradox, when coupled with what has been before advanced, is not to be wondered at, as an effect perceived *immediately* on the reduction of the wages of labour, which *afterwards* may gradually disappear.

While the mind is revolving those circumstances respecting the conduct of the poor during this time of scarcity which we have just past by ; while we are calling in aid the powers of memory and reflection, to fix on some leading principles which may be of service in the amendment or alteration of that system of poor-laws, under the administration of which the public have expended an annual revenue, so considerable, as would occasion *theory* to declare, that extreme poverty could not remain where so much was distributed ; did not *stubborn fact*, at the same time, prove, that poverty and misery not only remain, but seem to advance, nearly in the proportion that our expenditure increases ; while idleness and dissoluteness of manners go hand in hand, and the next generation promises to be worse than the present. While these and similar circumstances strike the mind, it is difficult to avoid the appearance of some degree of prejudice against the poor, for whose benefit this inquiry was first undertaken, and with a view to whose *real* and *best* interests it is continued. Being obliged to state matters as they strike the observation, and to reason from facts as they exist ; one is led to doubt the political propriety of increasing the price of labour by law, as the necessaries of life increase in price ; although it may be at the expense of that reputation all our countrymen are desirous to be renowned for, — the reputation of humanity.

And it is a matter of much doubt, whether the character of a humane man will be preserved in the opinion of many of our ten-

der-hearted patriots, or of our village-politicians, by a recommendation of schools of industry and parochial funds, the encouragement of friendly societies, and a constant active inspection of those who have the management of the parochial revenue and the conduct of the poor; together with a regular annual parliamentary investigation of this important subject; instead of higher wages, and the present unrestrained state of idleness and dissipation in which the rising generation is, I will not say educated, but, suffered to remain.

On the other hand, it is too manifest a truth, for our present comfort and future prospects, that if a wise and well-guided hand of authority does not, as soon as possible, stretch its benign influence over the land, and by some legislative line of conduct, which may couple our interests with our inclinations; and to which the poor and the rich, the employer and the employed, will not only willingly submit, but each of them, in their several stations, will actively coincide to carry into full execution and constant effect; were there no external cause of immense expenditure existing; no demands for supplies beyond a peace-establishment necessary; the nation could not long bear the increasing expenses of the poor; because they fall chiefly on those who raise the necessaries of life; which necessaries must of course advance in price, in proportion as larger burthens fall on the growers of them: this price must be paid by the labouring-poor, as well as by the other classes of the nation, which will occasion the rates and the price of labour still to rise. These causes and consequences, reacting on each other, may ultimately produce a crisis that we must all dread to think of.

L E T T E R L V.

WHILE all ranks of his majesty's subjects, by ancestral possessions, or their own industry, raised above the apprehension of want from the prevailing scarcity, were with a disinterested benevolence, publicly and in private, by donations and a voluntary increase of the wages of the labouring-poor, preserving their more indigent countrymen from the pressure of real want and apprehended famine; the legislature of the kingdom, with a benevolence and wisdom worthy of the best ages, under the happiest governments, by its celerity in enacting those laws which were best calculated for an expeditious relief of the times, nobly discharged their important duties; and his majesty's ministers, although in the midst of the most necessary, important, and expensive, contest with its enemies this nation was ever engaged in, with a promptitude of wife and liberal humanity, applied vast sums of money, which were raised for our defence from foreign foes, to our preservation from domestic famine, by encouraging the importation of foreign grain, by large and, before this time, unheard-of bounties; the payment of which bounties has been one of the means which has exhausted the Treasury of its riches; while, at the same time, the payment for the corn imported has assisted to drain the kingdom of its specie; a measure which, although it greatly tended to remove the apprehensions of the nation, and to reduce the price of corn to a level with the means the poor had, by their own exertions and the assistance of their neighbours, to purchase it; yet has not been without certain inconveniences, the pressure of which we now feel. The topic itself is new and important, both to the public interests of the state, and to those of the private individual; but of too extensive and complicated a nature to be here commented upon, were the knowledge and abilities of the writer equal to the disquisition; who conceives, that it is more within the line of his purpose,

purpose, and his capacity, to make some few observations on the acts which were passed in parliament this year, which solely respect the management of the poor.

The first is 36 Geo. III. cap. 10. and bears date, in the Statutes at Large, Dec. 18, 1795. This act, after a well-adapted preamble, enacts, that directors and guardians of the poor, incorporated by acts of parliament, may, whenever the average-price of wheat at the corn-market, Mark-lane, London, for the quarter, immediately preceding such annual, quarterly, or other general, meeting, shall have exceeded the average-price of wheat at the same market, during those years, from which the average-amount of the poor's rate was taken, upon the passing of the several incorporating-acts respectively, assess the several parishes, hamlets, and places, within their respective hundreds, towns, or districts, which now are, or have been, usually charged to the poor's rates, with such sums of money as such directors and guardians, &c. shall think necessary for the support and maintenance of the poor for the current quarter, and for paying the interest of the money borrowed under the incorporating-acts, and of any debts which may be incurred since the 1st of January, 1795, in the maintenance of the poor, notwithstanding such sums of money should exceed the assessments limited by the respective acts: provided, that such assessments, by virtue of this act, are made, collected, and paid, in the same manner, and subject to the same restrictions, regulations, and powers of appeal, &c. as the assessments made under the incorporating-acts. And provided also, that after January 1, 1798, the sums to be assessed, by virtue of this act, shall never exceed double the sum at present raised by virtue of any incorporating-act now existing.

This act of parliament gave a very necessary latitude, to the directors and guardians of the incorporated districts, to raise the assessments of the poor's rates, according to the urgency of the occasion; which authority they had abridged themselves of by the act of parliament incorporating them, and it has been attempted

tempted to obtain certain information to what degree each of the houses of industry, within the county of Suffolk, has made use of this authority; and for that purpose letters have been sent to the same gentlemen in the districts, who, with much obliging readiness, communicated that information which is contained in the former letters in this tract. Answers have not been returned to all the letters; but, as to those houses from which information has been obtained, it clearly appears, that the poor in them were maintained, through the years 1795 and 1796, with much less increase of rates than in any of the adjoining hundreds, where no houses of industry have been instituted; and, when the low rates at which the average of the parishes was struck in the incorporated hundreds are considered, there is reason to believe it is a matter of positive proof, that the maintenance of the poor through the two last years has not raised the poor-rates in the incorporated hundreds to half that assessment in the pound that their maintenance has occasioned the rates to be raised to in the hundreds not incorporated.

And although Sir F. M. Eden's Parochial Reports do not state the accounts of those two large incorporated houses of industry, that in the Isle of Wight and that at Shrewsbury, for either of the years of scarcity; yet as he says generally of the incorporated parishes in the Isle of Wight, that one parish pays two shillings in the pound rack-rent; another fifteen pence; another three shillings and three pence, on two-thirds of the rent; and of Grassinghall house of industry, Norfolk, that the average of the rates paid by the incorporated parishes may be stated at twenty pence in the pound; and, by referring to the average of the assessment of the incorporated parishes in the different houses of industry, as stated in a former Letter of this tract, it will clearly appear, when it is considered that the act of parliament only enabled them to double their assessments, that it cannot have cost *those* parishes, also, half the expense to maintain their poor during the last two years, estimating that ex-
pense

pense by the poor's rate, as it cost the parishes in the country near the incorporated districts; most of the other parishes in Suffolk, if not all, and many in Essex, having expended an assessment rising in different parishes from 12s. to above 20s. and one or two parishes to 30s. in the pound.

The cheap maintenance of the poor, in the houses of industry, is a fact I should conceive incontestably proved. The wholesomeness of that maintenance has never been doubted by those who have visited them; and if they, by any means, tend to diminish the chance of human life, of which some doubt has been made in a former Letter, surely it would have appeared, and might be proved, by a diminished population; as, in most districts where they have been instituted, years sufficient have passed for a diminution of population to be perceived, had that diminution happened. That question was asked in the letters sent: the answers returned have been to this effect: —

There is every reason to believe the population has increased much. — It is generally thought that the population, since the incorporation took place, has considerably increased. — The population has certainly increased, but in what proportion I cannot say. — Population increases among the poor. — We relieve many more women in child-bed than we did. — It is to be regretted that no proof can be collected on this point in those incorporated parishes mentioned in Sir F. M. Eden's parochial reports; because, an increased population being proved with equal probability in those districts, as it is in Suffolk, there could be no doubt of the fact throughout the incorporated districts in the kingdom, and one great objection to these institutions would be done away: not that it is, by any means, the intention of these pages to recommend any means of compelling parishes to institute houses of industry; the wish of the writer is, to preserve the rights of those already instituted inviolate in every respect, (except that of compelling them to become schools of industry, as far as it is compatible with the advantage

vantage and convenience of the parishes incorporated, and subjecting them to a similar inspection and return of their state and condition to parliament, as is expected from the rest of the kingdom,) and also to preserve unrepealed the statute of 22 Geo. III. c. 83. and its amendment 33 Geo. III. c. 35. as those acts of parliament encourage them, but do not compel the institution of them.

The other act of parliament passed 24th December, 1795, and is cap. 23 of the same sessions. Its preamble recites the inconvenience that has arisen from an act of the 9th of George I. empowering parishes to purchase or hire houses, and to contract with any person for lodging, keeping, and maintaining, the poor; and that the poor, who shall refuse to be so lodged, kept, and maintained, shall not be entitled to receive collection or relief from the overseers of the parish. The inconvenience recited is, that this provision in the act prevents an industrious poor person from receiving such occasional relief as is best suited to his peculiar case, as it holds out conditions of relief injurious to the comfort and domestic situation of such poor person; it therefore enacts,

“ That the overseers, with the consent of the parishioners at a vestry, or the approbation in writing of any of his Majesty’s justices of the peace acting in the district, may relieve poor persons at their own houses under certain circumstances of temporary illness or distress; and that any of his Majesty’s justices of the peace usually acting within the district may, at his discretion, order such poor persons to be relieved at their own houses; provided that the special cause of ordering such relief be written in such order given for relief, and that such order remain in force for a time not exceeding a month from the date of the order; and that it shall be lawful for any *two* justices to make any farther order for a time not exceeding one month, and so on, from time to time, as the occasion may require, such justice or justices first administering an oath as to the need and cause of such relief, in each of the above cases, and thereupon summoning the overseer of the poor of such parish to shew

cause why such poor person should not receive such relief as aforesaid : but that this act shall not extend to places where houses of industry are provided under 22 Geo. III. c. 83. or under the authority of any special act of parliament now in force." To this act of parliament humanity must give assent, and prudence cannot object.

L E T T E R LVI.

FROM the time that the first edition of this publication had been the occasion of introducing me to the acquaintance of Mr. Rose, a correspondence while in the country, and an interchange of sentiments on this important subject when I was in town, attended, on his part, with every polite attention and friendly civility, had been continued between us; and, towards the end of January, 1796, I had the pleasure to receive from him a letter requesting me to meet Mr. Pitt, and several gentlemen who had paid attention to, and had at heart, the amelioration of the system of the poor-laws, at dinner at Mr. Rose's on the following Monday. Accordingly I went to town, and had the honour of meeting Mr. Pitt, and several most respectable members of the House of Commons, together with two other gentlemen, one of whom has paid great attention to the subject of the meeting, and a professional gentleman, whose abilities and technical experience are well known. Soon after the servants were withdrawn, after dinner, Mr. Pitt produced a sketch of the heads of a bill which, he said, he had in contemplation, and on which he requested the opinion of the company present; observing, that, for the purpose of considering each topic individually, we should conceive ourselves a Committee on the Poor-Laws, and have some conversation on each head as it occurred.

Although

Although the consideration of the subject was continued, without any interruption, till between one and two o'clock in the morning, the sketch had not all passed under review ; when one of the company, while the conversation was employed about orders of removal, remarking the time of the night, Mr. Pitt then observed, that it was high time for us to remove ourselves, and our committee broke up.

A day or two afterwards I received a copy of the heads which had been the subject of our consideration, and a note from Mr. Rose, signifying it was Mr. Pitt's desire that I should attend, the following day, at eleven o'clock, at his house in Downing-street, where I again met the same gentlemen, and afterwards most of them, at different times through the month of February, as it suited Mr. Pitt's convenience.

When all the heads had again been reconsidered, Mr. Rose sent me a copy of them, as then amended on reconsideration ; and informed me it was desired that I should, in a pamphlet, shortly explain to the public the good effects which might be expected from an act of parliament on the plan and principle contained in the heads alluded to ; and that it should be prepared for, and passed through, the press as soon as possible. I then returned into the country to prepare the pamphlet ; but, being prevented some days by illness, I was not able to send it to town quite so expeditiously as was expected ; and, about a week after it was sent to Mr. Rose, I was informed, by letter from him, that my pamphlet had been received and approved of ; but that, in the mean time, Mr. Pitt had been indefatigable in his application to the subject ; that the heads had been reduced to the form of a bill, which was then printing ; that some alterations had been made, to which the pamphlet could not apply ; that, as soon as printed, a copy should be sent me ; and, a few days afterwards, I had the honour to receive, from Mr. Pitt, Heads of a Bill for Amending and Enforcing the Laws for the Relief, Instruction, and Employment, of the Poor. I then employed my

time in making my observations on the bill in the form it then was, and transmittted them to Mr. Rose, and soon afterwards went to town ; when he informed me that the measure was then postponed for the present.

As soon as the bill, as amended by the committee, now before the House, for the better support and maintenance of the poor, was printed, I received two copies of it from that gentleman, desiring me to make my observations upon the different clauses contained in it, and write them in the margin of one of the copies, which was to be sent back to him, which was accordingly done pretty much at large ; and I attempted to shew wherein, by its aberrations from the heads settled by Mr. Pitt and those gentlemen, whose attention to this subject has been mentioned, the bill had deviated from that plan which was better calculated to do the most probable good, at the least probable expense, to the public.

The Heads of the Bill for Amending and Enforcing the Laws for the Relief, Instruction, and Employment, of the Poor, proposed according to the plan opened by Mr. Pitt to the House of Commons, in the session of parliament 1796, having been printed for the benefit of the members, and again by Sir F. M. Eden, in the third volume of his History of the Poor ; and the bill, as amended by the committee, being printed and dispersed by different editions through the kingdom ; it would be absurd to reprint them in this publication, as it would increase to no purpose the expense of a book already too expensive: but some good may arise from printing the heads, which I had the honour to assist in settling, as probably it will be allowed by those gentlemen who bear in their recollection the speech, in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave a sketch of his ideas on the subject, on the second reading of Mr. Whitbread's bill ; that these heads more nearly correspond with the masterly sketch then given in a speech, which it is to be lamented was not heard in a full House, and never has had justice done it by any minute or report yet printed; and which, in the opinion of some
good

good judges of elocution, never has been exceeded in this kingdom as an oratorical effort, in point of perspicuous compression of a comprehensive subject, terseness, elegance of expression, and effect; and to the ideas contained in which speech, the more closely any legislative plan for ameliorating the system of the poor-laws adheres, the more probable will be its good effect. The plan alluded to is, therefore, here introduced; first observing, that, in several places where the words are in *Italic*, the matter was not wholly determined on; and also where the word *OR* is used, to point out different modes of acting, the precise mode was left unsettled; and as the payment of the county-guardians for their trouble and time was not then *positively* determined, either as to the manner or the quantum, that part of the plan is not inserted.

A S K E T C H

OF THE

H E A D S O F A N A C T

FOR THE

EMPLOYMENT, INSTRUCTION, AND RELIEF, OF THE POOR,

AS AMENDED, ON RECONSIDERATION, AFTER SEVERAL MEETINGS IN
DOWNING-STREET, FEBRUARY, 1796.

PART I. — *Employment and Instruction of the Poor.*

WHEREAS the laws now in force have not been sufficiently carried into practice, for employing the poor who are able to work, and for instructing the infant-poor.

Justices to be authorized within a given time to associate parishes to the number or extent of
for the purpose of the act, *in the same manner as under the 22d Geo. III. ch. 83.*

The

The justices to be authorized and required, within from the passing of this act, to make order for the establishment of schools of industry in every parish, or set of associated parishes; and, for that purpose, to order a rate to be made in the first instance, and to be paid by instalments, for a given period, as they shall deem convenient, or to authorize a certain sum to be borrowed on the credit of the rates in the parish or *parishes* for purchasing materials to set the poor at work, as well grown persons as children, and for erecting, hiring, or purchasing, schools of industry, for the instruction of the poor, and for employing those who cannot, when instructed, conveniently work at home, either from the circumstances of the families, or from the nature of the work to be done.

Justices to be likewise authorized to compel the purchasing, at stated periods, fresh materials by the officers in each parish, or (by some mode to be provided) within each hundred, to be distributed to the officers in each respective parish, for manufacturing articles of clothing, and every other article of necessary use, for the poor within it, or such other articles for which they can find convenient sale.

An option must be given to justices, to decide on a view of the circumstances of different parishes, or with respect to different classes of the poor in the same parish.

Whether, 1. Parishes to maintain, lodge, and board, the poor employed in the schools of industry, taking the benefit of their earnings.

OR, 2. Parishes to feed and take care of them during the hours of their work, taking the benefit of their earnings.

In both these cases, the poor to be encouraged by rewards.

OR,

OR, 3. Parishes to furnish materials, implements, &c. and to repurchase the manufactures at stated prices, under certain regulations, with an option of the work being done at home or at school.

OR, 4. Parishes to furnish materials, &c. as before, leaving the families to sell the manufactures.

Provision, that if more parishes than one have, with the approbation of the justices, associated for the express purpose of adopting any one of these modes preferably, such agreement shall, in that respect, be binding.

Provision to prevent apprenticing in husbandry for a shorter period than now allowed.

Employment on the roads of separate or associated parishes, or other parish-work.

Labour to be found, according to some one or other of these modes, for all those who are settled in the parish, who cannot find work for themselves.

Provision for cases where substantial householders shall offer to give a weekly rate for employing children in agriculture; and such children to be on the same footing as those who attend the schools of industry.

No contracts to be allowed in future for the lodging, keeping, and employing, the poor.

Places of reception, if necessary, in each county for lunatics, ideots, blind, &c. &c. Vide 9 Geo. II. c. 7.

Power to convert the subsisting workhouses into schools of industry.

PART II. — *Removals, Settlement, and Relief.*

No person to be removed as chargeable, if he shall become so only from temporary disability, or sickness; nor shall relief be withheld from him to which he shall be entitled, under this act, from the number of his children;
provided

provided that his settlement shall be ascertained, as under the Friendly-Society Act; and that, during his residence, he shall have subscribed to a friendly society, from

after the commencement of this act, if any is established in the parish or neighbourhood, and has sent his children, if required, to the parish-school of industry, or received work from thence, or employed them as above-provided.

Provided, that if no friendly society shall be established in the parish or neighbourhood, or there being one established, and the person applying shall not be able on his application to procure admission to it, then, and in every such case, his contributing a certain sum to a box, to be kept by the officers of the parish, shall be deemed sufficient. And in all parishes or towns, where there are no friendly societies, or within miles thereof, or where application shall be made by persons refused admittance to friendly societies, the parish-officers shall be compelled to receive contributions, and to pay weekly allowances proportioned thereto, during sickness, to the contributors, who shall be placed in the same situation, for the purposes before-mentioned, as if they were members of friendly societies.—Parishes, relieving, in the cases specified, persons not having acquired a settlement, to recover part of the sum given in relief, after deducting what the parish or the friendly society has received.

No relief to be given to persons not having acquired settlements in cases above-specified, except by setting them to work.

Every person to gain a settlement who has resided *five years* in a parish, and has complied with the above conditions.

All

All *persons* having more than *two children*, ages to be fixed, to be entitled to a certain pecuniary allowance weekly, unless the overseers, &c. furnish them with the means of earning to the same amount by work, or make competent provisions for their relief, by advancing a sum of money, in the manner to be pointed out by the act.

Power to justices to order overseers, &c. to advance a sum of money to any person entitled to relief, to enable such person to purchase a cow, or other animal, so as thereby to give them an opportunity of increasing their income to the amount to which they would be entitled to relief.

Persons not to be excluded from relief in certain cases, on account of cottages in their own right which they occupy, or other visible property, not exceeding a certain amount, and of a certain description.

No person to be entitled to relief, for themselves or their families, who shall decline labour offered to them by the overseers, &c. if able to execute it.

Persons having subscribed to friendly societies, or contributed to parish-boxes, as above, for years, and becoming old or enfirm, to be entitled to a certain extra-relief from the fund raised for the poor, in proportion as their health and strength shall fail them.

PART III. — *Inspection of Parishes, and Execution of the Laws.*

Overseers to be made more permanent in office, and to be bound to answer, on oath, *certain* queries to be put to them by justices, and such other questions as shall be put to them, relative to the management and employment of the poor.

Power to continue overseer in office for a second year, and for subsequent ones, if three-fifths of the parish, in number and value, shall concur in the measure; but such

person not to be compellable to serve : the three-fifths, as before, may, however, agree to give him a salary not exceeding payable out of the rate.

Additional provisions to compel overseers to make up their accounts.

Power to be given to the resident clergyman, if rector, vicar, or perpetual curate, or to the officiating minister, if authorized by the bishop in a manner to be required, to inspect, from time to time, the *books and accounts* of the parish, and likewise any houses or schools of industry within the same; and if, in any case, he shall be of opinion that the laws are not properly enforced, he shall have like power with that herein-after given to the guardians of the poor to apply to the justices, at their petty sessions, who shall proceed in like manner thereon.

One or more guardians of the poor to be appointed for each county, according to its extent, to be chosen by a majority of persons having freehold-estates within the county above the amount of £100 a year, and to have an allowance payable out of the *county-rates*.

No person to be eligible who is not qualified, by property, to elect as above-described.

To continue in office for four years, unless removed by justices, at the quarter-sessions, for cause assigned, at the end of which he may be chosen again.

The guardians of the poor to be required, within calendar-months of his appointment, to visit and inspect every parish or place, providing for its own poor, within the county or district for which he is appointed; and afterwards, during his continuance in office, to visit every parish again at least once in the course of each of the three remaining years for which he is elected. To be authorized and required, at every such visitation, to inquire particularly

particularly into the number and condition of persons supporting themselves by labour, and of those receiving relief ; distinguishing their several ages and descriptions.

The amount and variation of the poor's rate, and the application of the same, under its several heads ; shewing particularly the sums expended in setting the poor to work, with the particulars thereof.

The number employed ; distinguishing their ages and descriptions, and the nature and value of the work done, and the manner of disposing of the same, and whether they were employed in their own houses or in the schools of industry.

The number of poor receiving pecuniary allowances, or to whom money has been advanced, under the provisions of this act, for their better support.

The state of the schools of industry, *and the houses of industry*, (if any,) with the number of persons lodged, maintained, or instructed, therein. The number of deaths within the year ; the rules for the management of the said schools ; and, generally, all such matters as they shall be required by the justices, at their quarter or petty sessions, to examine, and report thereupon.

The guardians of the poor to have power, for these purposes, to transmit, from time to time, any questions which they may think necessary, to church-wardens and overseers, and direct them to prepare answers, in writing, to be verified on oath, and to be authorized, also, to call church-wardens, overseers, and other persons, before them, at the time of their visitation, to examine them on oath, and to inspect all books and accounts ; to report the same to the justices at a special petty-sessions, to be held as shall be directed by the act, and then to deliver a schedule of the foregoing particulars in each parish, ac-

ording to a form to be annexed, together with such observations as to the guardians of the poor shall seem requisite.

And the guardian of the poor shall be specially required, in every case where he shall be of opinion that all practicable measures have not been taken for carrying into execution the purposes of this act, in setting the poor to work, or furnishing them with additional means of maintaining themselves without periodical relief, to certify the same to the justices, and likewise to represent to the justices what modes of employment and assistance are, in his opinion, applicable to the circumstances of such parish; and what advances of money, and increase of rate, are necessary for the same. And, in every such case, the guardian of the poor shall leave, with the officers of the parish complained of, a copy of such certificate weeks before he shall deliver the same to the justices of the petty-sessions.

And, in case the officers of the parish shall not, at the said sessions, attend, to shew cause why the regulations proposed should not be carried into effect, the justices shall make order for their being carried into effect; and if the justices, on hearing the parish-officers, shall be satisfied that such measures ought not to be adopted, they shall make such order as they shall think fit, recording the reasons why the measures recommended by the guardians of the poor cannot be carried fully into effect.

Copies of all the orders made at the petty-sessions, and copies of all the reports of the guardians of the poor, together with an abstract, to be transmitted to the quarter-sessions.

If either the overseers or the guardians of the poor shall be dissatisfied with the determination of the petty-sessions,

sessions, power to appeal to the quarter-sessions, having given days notice thereof, whose order shall be final.

Guardians of the poor to transmit copies of their reports, and of all orders made thereupon, to the Privy-Council, with a general abstract, according to a form annexed.

The Privy-Council to employ a person to prepare abstracts of the general returns of the whole kingdom, and to lay the same, together with the returns on which they are founded, before parliament, within one month after the first of January, in each year, if it shall be then sitting; and, if not then, within twenty days after the first day of the session.

In order to enforce, still further, an attention to the due execution of the law, it might be proposed to make a standing-order of the House for referring those accounts to a Select Committee, to consider and report upon the same, and that such report should afterwards be referred to the consideration of a Committee of the whole House, where the result should be stated in distinct resolutions, as is now practised in the India-budget.

Saving clauses, respecting provisions against vagrancy, &c.

It would be with a very ill grace indeed, that any person, having had the honour of being consulted on a measure, which the very superior judgement and experience of those who afterwards reconsidered it have, with the approbation of Mr. Pitt, thought proper to alter, should inveigh against those alterations, which more mature consideration has made; on which account a respectful silence shall be preserved on every alteration except one, which so militates with the outline laid down by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the
speech

speech which has been alluded to, as would convict me of a pusillanimous indifference to the good effect of this great measure, were it to be passed by unnoticed.

To prove the assertion, recourse must be had to that part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech, which is published by Mr. Longman, in Paternoster-row, as it is said, *that* publication is from the best authority of any which has appeared in print.

“ He should wish, therefore, that an opportunity were given of restoring the original purity of the poor-laws, and of removing those corruptions by which they had been obscured. He was convinced that the evils which they had occasioned did not arise out of their original constitution, but coincided with the opinion of Blackstone, that, in proportion as the wise regulations, that were established in the long and glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, have been superseded by subsequent enactments, the utility of the institution has been impaired, and the benevolence of the plan rendered fruitless.

“ While he thus had expressed those sentiments which the discussion naturally prompted, it might not, perhaps, be improper, on such an occasion, to lay before the House the ideas floating in his mind, though not digested with sufficient accuracy, nor arranged with sufficient clearness. Neither what the honourable gentleman proposed, nor what he himself had suggested, were remedies adequate to the evil it was intended to remove. Supposing, however, the two modes of remedying the evil were on a par in effect, the preference in principle was clearly due to that which was least arbitrary in its nature, but it was not difficult to perceive that the remedy proposed by the honourable gentlemen would either be completely ineffectual, or such as far to over-reach its mark. There was of course a difference in the numbers which compose the families of the labouring-poor, and it must necessarily require more to support an infant-family. Besides, by the regulations proposed, either the man with a small family would have too much wages, or
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the man with a large family, who had done most service to his country, would have too little. So that were the minimum fixed upon the standard of a large family, it might operate as an encouragement to idleness on one part of the community; and, if it were fixed on the standard of a small family, those would not enjoy the benefit of it, for whose relief it was intended. What measure, then, could be found to supply the defect? Let us, said he, make relief, in cases where there is a number of children, a matter of right, an honour, instead of a ground for opprobrium and contempt. This will make a large family a blessing, and not a curse; and this will draw a proper line of distinction between those who are able to provide for themselves by their labour, and those who, after having enriched their country with a number of children, have a claim upon its assistance for their support. All this, however, he would confess, was not enough, if they did not engraft upon it resolutions to discourage the granting relief where it was not wanted. If the necessities of those who required assistance could be supplied, by giving it in labour, or affording employment, which is the principle of the act of Queen Elizabeth, the most important advantages would be gained. They would thus benefit those to whom they afforded relief, not only by the assistance bestowed, but by giving habits of industry and frugality, and, in furnishing a temporary bounty, enable them to make permanent provision for themselves. By giving effect to the operation of friendly societies, as had been already hinted at, individuals would be secured from becoming a burthen upon the public, and, if necessary, be enabled to subsist upon a fund which their own industry had contributed to raise. These great points of granting relief, according to the number and age of children, preventing removals at the caprice of the parish-officer, encouraging subscriptions to friendly societies, and extending as far as possible the means of employing the poor, would tend, in a very great degree, to remove every complaint to which the present partial remedy could be applied. Experience had already shewn how much could be

be

be done by the industry of children, and the advantages of early employing them in such branches of manufactures as they are capable of executing. The extension of schools of industry was also an object of material importance. If any one would take the trouble to compute the amount of all the earnings of the children who are already educated in this manner, he would be surprised, when he came to consider the weight which their support by their own labours took off the country, and the addition which, by the fruits of their toil, and the habits to which they were formed, was made to its internal opulence. The suggestion of these schools was originally taken from Lord Hale and Mr. Locke, and upon such authority he had no difficulty in recommending the adoption of them to the encouragement of the legislature. Much might be effected by a plan of this nature, susceptible of constant improvement. Such a plan would convert the relief granted to the poor into an encouragement to industry, instead of being, as it is by the present poor-laws, a premium to idleness, and a school for sloth. There was also a number of regulations to which, on the same principle, it would be necessary to attend. The law, which prohibits giving relief where any visible property remains, should be abolished. It is neither consistent with policy or humanity to force an industrious man, on any temporary occasion, to part with the last shilling of his little capital, and compel him to descend to a state of wretchedness from which he could never recover, merely that he might be entitled to a casual supply. Instead of enforcing so rigorous a principle, cases might, on the contrary, occur, in which, with strict and proper precautions, small sums might be advanced by the parish to put the persons who received them in the way of acquiring what might place them in a situation to make permanent provision for themselves."

The very apposite quotation from the 14th satire of Juvenal, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer in so elegant a manner introduced, is not mentioned in this sketch of his speech; but that
 quotation

quotation was so aptly applied as to explain, to the greatest precision, the prevailing idea which may be supposed then floating in his mind, that its introduction requires no apology :

Gratum est quod patriæ civem populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patriæ sit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis et bellorum et pacis rebus agendis.

The question that naturally flows from these pages in Mr. Longman's publication, combined with this quotation, is ; whether a sketch of an act of parliament which enforces schools of industry, and an annual parliamentary inspection of, and control over, the management of the poor, by obligatory clauses, which, if not carried into execution, bespeak an inattention to, and disobedience of, a positive written law of the land, and not any fault in the declaratory part of the law itself ; which principle is also enforced by another obligatory clause, with respect to finding employment for the poor, *viz.* that where such employment is *not found* by some of the means pointed out, *an allowance should be made from the parochial rates to the poor in a certain proportion, for such of them and their children as are permitted to live in idleness, by such an inattention, on the part of the officers of the parish, to the law of the land ?*

Or, heads of an act of parliament which, in the first instance, oblige a payment to the poor in respect of their number of children, and leave it a matter of option in the district, whether schools of industry should be instituted or not ; and also, whether an annual parliamentary inspection and control should or should not be enacted ; are most in conformity with that part of the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the second reading of Mr. Whitbread's bill, which has been alluded to, as explained by this quotation from Juvenal ? without which inspection into, or some control over, the management of the poor, of a *higher* nature, and more *effective* powers, than the present, over which we have long slept, we shall be soon awakened to certain ruin, as to the morals of the poor, and the property of those who maintain them.

Any other deviation from the plan, which that speech gave a glimpse of to the House of Commons, it is by no means my intention to observe upon; nor am I bold enough to assert, that the plan referred to is now the best policy, and replete with the wisest humanity; but, on the contrary, believe, more knowledge of local facts and circumstances may be necessary, before a bill of this extreme importance is passed into a law; and it may be no improbable conjecture, that the investigation of the management and conduct of the poor, their morals, habits, economy, and feelings, being left open, the stream of practical information and theoretic knowledge being kept running, will refine itself; and the real state and situation of the poor in society, and the rule of conduct with respect to them, that is most likely to benefit them, and the nation itself, will more clearly appear; consequently, that a law made in the *maturity* of such an investigation will be more likely to approach perfection than one enacted in its infancy.

While this is going through the press, Mr. Whitbread has again urged the Chancellor of the Exchequer to bring forward the debate on the bill now before parliament; declaring, at the same time, that, unless the sense of the House is taken on that now before them, he will himself introduce some proposition on the subject.

Without doubting, in the least, the abilities of Mr. Whitbread to offer a proposition in favour of the labouring classes of men, or his wish to stand forth in the eyes of the nation as their protector and friend; it may with truth be asserted, that, if his proposed plan be of the nature of his last effort, it ought not to be the law of the land: because, as has been proved, it has not necessity, justice, or convenience, for its basis; and, if it is, in this respect, like most of the late acts on the subject of the poor, that it applies itself only to some *small* part of this capacious field of legislation, it ought not to supersede a *general* investigation of the subject, now it has the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's abilities thrown steadily upon the whole system; but still Mr. Whitbread's
intention

intention is no bad symptom in the case, which wants information, and stands in need of the clearest lights of practical experience and theoretic ability; and every other light which may prevent stumbling at the threshold of an intricate subject of this importance is of consequence. A good act of parliament, a few months later, is better than a doubtful one a few months sooner; and, when all sufficient information is obtained, we feel ourselves safe in Mr. Pitt's application of it to every wise and humane purpose. The present system already too much resembles a thing of shreds and patches, to bear more bolstering statutes; and, probably, a total repeal of every act of parliament since the 43d of Elizabeth. A strict and active execution of that act alone might be attended with better effect than the present system, as at present executed, although assisted with every additional bill, which each member in the House of Commons might think it expedient to propose, and the parliament to pass.

In the mean time, it is probable, that such a return of the annual accounts of the overseers to parliament, as has been recommended, being tried somewhat more than one year, every necessary information would be obtained. By such an act, for the overseers keeping their accounts under certain heads, and those accounts to be returned to parliament in the manner as was first proposed, the information of two years would be collected by Easter, 1799, if the act was to pass by Christmas; the number of claimants for the weekly allowances to the children of the poor, together with the total expenses attending that humane measure proposed by the bill, before the House of Commons, would be known; as also the effect occasioned by schools of industry, in those parishes where they have been instituted, as far as the morals and the earnings of the children have been meliorated and increased, would be seen; whence the propriety of a general institution of them throughout the kingdom might be estimated; and, during this time, the effect of a parliamentary investigation

into, and control over, the management of the poor might be judged of, by the proof of a greater circumspection in the conduct of the overseers, and of the poor themselves, when conscious that the eye of the greatest authority in the kingdom is constantly over their conduct. These and many other important articles of information might in this short time be obtained on the subject, as well as a probable amendment of conduct in the parish-officers, and of morals and manners in the people, without any very considerable addition of expense.

L E T T E R LVII.

THE exertions of the Rev. Mr. Bouyer, in the cause of industry and the poor, by the institution, continued patronage, and supervision, of the schools of industry in Lincolnshire, which have been mentioned in an early part of this tract, occasioned me to wish much for the correspondence of that gentleman on the subject; which honour I have very lately obtained by the kind interference of my valuable friend Mr. Spranger, a master in Chancery; who, at my request, informed Mr. Bouyer of my wish to have an answer to a few questions respecting the schools under his direction, which he was so obliging to comply with, by favouring me with a very polite letter on the subject, full of important information.

1st. In answer to my questions, Mr. Bouyer says, That schools of industry are, when properly administered, certainly very profitable to parishes: the average absolute numerical profit, clear of all expenses, except the first building and furnishing, may be estimated, by the lowest computation, at a shilling a week each for all the children admitted into them: — at a much larger, though
less

less certainly estimable, sum, in the importunate applications for relief which they prevent; — but if they were generally enforced, regulated, and sustained, by legislative authority, at a rate of profit (arising necessarily out of the melioration of principles and habits) perfectly incalculable.

2d. That the honorary and intrinsically valuable rewards to meritorious children are fully kept up, and indeed rather increased, in proportion to the present state of the society's funds; and the friends and promoters of the institution have never seen any reason to depart, in any material particular, from the manner of their application and distribution.

3d. In some places, the poor are become fully sensible of the benefits of the institution; and, in a neighbouring market-town, absolutely importuned the persons who had formed the poor-house to open in it a day-school of industry, for the employment of the children of the town; a benefit of which they this year lament the privation, occasioned by the selfishness and indolence of the persons into whose hands the management of that house has now fallen; but that much impression has not been made on the minds of the poor in general.

4th. That knitting and spinning jersey are the only objects to which the schools can now attend; and that these were the principal, but by no means the only, objects he had in contemplation, had he been favoured with more universal and more persevering support.

Mr. Bouyer's letter contains also many very conclusive reasons why these schools, in Lincolnshire, have not in general hitherto met with that full success, that every friend to humanity expected, and had reason to hope, that part of the kingdom would have received from the experiment; but, at the same time, the following pleasing account of the good effects arising from them has been extracted from his very friendly and valuable communication.

That

That he has the heart-felt pleasure of seeing a general tenor of regularity and good conduct mark the lives of those young people who have received the favours of the society; and of *particularly* remarking, that those, who have been honoured with the *highest* rewards, are *equally* distinguished by the commendation of the masters whom they serve, and that some of them are advantageously settled in life, through the assistance of this institution; and becoming, as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, happy, useful, and virtuous, members of society.

That the plan is still pursued of rewarding meritorious youth, in proportion to the scale to which the funds of the schools are narrowed; and every day's experience, whether of success or inconvenience, still confirms the expediency of schools; which, in the few places where they are kept up, materially contribute to the good order of the parish, and the diminution of its burthens; whilst the only difficulties of their present administration arise from the comparative uncertainty of the work of those candidates who are not collected under one regular government, and whom, for want of schools, they are forced to admit to a participation of the premiums.

The knitting trials, restrained to children under eight years of age, cause as early exertions as human nature is capable of. They had one of them on April 27th: there were twenty-seven candidates, under eight years old, for fifteen premiums. The trial consisted in their knitting up each seventeen yards in length of worsted, as part of a stocking, upon middle-sized needles; and the child who finished it, the second of the whole number, was only five years old, and performed that task without one single slip, or mistake, in twenty-nine minutes: that work was well worth a halfpenny; and, according to the proportion which practice teaches to settle with some certainty between a single hour's exertions and a common day's work of eight hours only, that little child could, without any sort of fatigue or hindrance from proper play and exercise,

ercise, earn a shilling a week at this most unprofitable employment; and when it is considered that, without such encouragements as are held out by the society, the eldest child there would never have learnt any work at all, we may, from such instances, estimate, in some degree, the value of all such public rewards.

The society, which seemed to be at its lowest ebb last year, is now apparently gaining fresh vigour, and the spirit of it plainly reviving. This appeared at the adjudication-meeting, on April 27th, by a considerable increase in the number of candidates, in the proportion of one-fourth more than last year. Besides this, four neighbouring parishes have intimated their intention to build a central school on a large plan. This revival may be attributed partly to Mr. Pitt's having declared his intention of introducing schools of industry into general practice.

In some other counties, and parts of counties, the plan of schools of industry has been more successfully tried than in Lincolnshire: no where more so, in Mr. Bouyer's opinion, than in the county of Rutland, which began very soon after those in Lincolnshire, and literally adopted all their proceedings and forms. From these they have since only departed in very few instances; some of which variations are happy consequences of the spirit with which they are supported, and apply to objects highly proper and beneficial. That society flourishes exceedingly, and is honoured, not only by the countenance and patronage, but also by the cordial co-operation, of the first noblemen and gentlemen of the county.

Mr. Bouyer wished to return the most explicit answers to the questions which were sent him, but, in so doing, a very considerable difficulty arose from the fear of misconception. He says,

The Society of Industry may be considered in two different aspects. *First*, as a trial of the general plan of assembling, under proper government, the poor children of the parish, from the earliest part of their infancy at which they are capable of any exertion,

exertion, till they shall be old and strong enough for service, or labour in husbandry; and giving them, in that important interval, a public education, by means profitable to themselves and parents, and capable of kindling honest ambition and emulation in their minds. *Secondly*, as a local establishment in that part of the county where the plan originated. — The success of the undertaking, in these two views of it, has been extremely different: flattering and encouraging, beyond description, in the *former*; but, in the *latter*, obstructed by various difficulties, which have tried the patience and perseverance of its friends and well-wishers very severely.

Mr. Bouyer also wishes to have it observed, that this is no new representation of the matter; in proof of which he begs leave to refer to his Statement, p. 96, 97, and 98, of the last Edition of the Society's Pamphlet, published eight years ago, part of which may be seen by the reader in the 34th Letter of this Series: and, as a farther proof of this observation, the pamphlet alluded to then goes on to state,

“ That, in the mean while, the Society of Industry seems to have made some little progress in its humble walk, as a preparatory step to a more general and comprehensive establishment; but the Editor cannot refrain from observing, that many non-resident proprietors of large estates in these parts, whose goodness of heart and charitable disposition cannot be questioned, appear to have been negligently, or perhaps industriously, kept from the knowledge of the efforts for reformation made by the society, of the success of those efforts in part, and of the much greater efficacy which would have accrued to those salutary measures from *their benefactions* and *subscriptions*, and still more from *their influence* and *authority* properly exerted.

“ Among the many ill consequences which attend the annual change of overseers, the society has sustained a very considerable

able diminution of its income by the ignorance, neglect, prejudices, or personal resentments, of new-comers into office, who have often withdrawn the periodical subscriptions after having received the greatest benefits from the society; and, in many instances, to the bitter disappointment of many deserving children, whom, by these means, they disqualified from becoming candidates for the society's premiums." His Letter then continues to state,

That, after the experience which has since been had, and although the fund for rewarding merit, and the circle of its influence, have now been reduced to one-third of their original extent; although the operation of the laws above-recited, and of many other local disadvantages, which it would be tedious, and, in some degree, invidious, to enumerate; yet none of these disappointments have had the smallest tendency to invalidate the evidence which the trial has procured of the general utility of the measure, if not of its absolute necessity, as affording the only probable means of national reform.

But it seems to be the opinion of my correspondent, that its success in that view must depend on legislative support; and, to make that support effectual, there must be,

1. A general uniformity in the outline, to give not only stability to the regulation, but a proper direction to the efforts of the inferior agents in it.

2. A permanent administration, by skilful and responsible persons, substituted to the rotation of overseers; which is the most conspicuous blemish of our poor-laws; for, they seem to be enacted on the absurd supposition that skill, honesty, and perseverance, were transferrable, from one farmer to another, with the parish-books.

3. A proper inducement to persons, who are able and responsible, to give up their whole time, or a much greater portion of it that can be expected gratuitously; especially, if the principle

ciple of rotation is, as he apprehends it must be, totally relinquished.

4. A very particular care so to place such appointments that they shall not degenerate into patronage, jobs, pensions, and sinecures. Offices, and, to a certain degree, lucrative ones, must be created ; but they should be much fewer, more effective, and more responsible, than in any plan that has yet appeared. Perhaps the greatest objection to that which is now under public contemplation is, the multiplicity of offices, by rotation, slower indeed than that of the present overseers, and depending upon a general activity in public business, which has never yet existed but in speculation ; instead of putting the execution into the hands of fewer persons, who should continue in office, *quamdiu se bene gesserint*, and be held to their duty by the only tie which can secure the performance of it, a responsibility proportioned to the value of the employment. The utmost expectation that can be formed, by persons acquainted with human nature and the present state of society, is this, — that as many patriotic and public-spirited men may be found, in each county or district, as shall be strictly necessary to enforce that responsibility, and to examine into the discharge of those purchased duties, looking for no other reward than the consciousness of their own integrity and zeal, and prepared, at the same time, to hear their good qualities, and the exertions by which they display them, oftener questioned, or misrepresented, than thankfully, or even candidly, acknowledged.

Such is the opinion of a gentleman whose exertions, and consequently experience, in the regulation of these schools of industry, are well known ; and whose well-founded judgement, and prediction of the probable advantages arising from an institution of them by legislative authority, merit great attention. It would be presumptuous were the writer of these Letters, whose experience, in this most useful line of regulation, is so trifling as to
 confine

confine his judgement to that of a mere theorist, to add any observations to those contained in this Letter, or to prolong it by any animadversions on what his correspondent has written: he will only venture to suggest, that, probably, as to the *general* management of the poor, in the parish, the institution of overseers, by the 43d of Elizabeth, was not quite so replete with absurdity as his correspondent represents; and conceives that they are, even in *these times*, the properest persons to be entrusted with the management of the poor, a person of longer durability in office, and more particularly qualified for the purpose, having the supervision of the schools of industry: besides, it appears as somewhat tending to injustice, that the overseers of the poor, who are in rotation, those from whose pockets the rates for the maintenance of the poor are taken, should not be entrusted with the disbursement of the money they collect, were that disbursement but subject to the supervision and control of Parliament.

L E T T E R LVIII.

DEAR SIR,

AS most of these Letters originally were sent to you for your very useful publication, the Annals of Agriculture; as they took their rise from some of those friendly conversations in which we have so frequently agitated the interests of Agriculture, and the humbler votaries to her shrine, the labouring-poor; with great propriety may the last of the Series be addressed to you; more especially as it affords the writer an opportunity of acknowledging publicly the satisfaction he has received from the long habits of correspondence and friendly intercourse which have subsisted be-

tween us, and the real pleasure he takes in seeing you placed in that situation where your abilities, and indefatigable application to the interests of agriculture, have proved, and have the greatest chance of continuing to prove, an honour to yourself, and an advantage to your country.

We have often lamented together,

Non ullus aratro

Dignus honos.

That cause of complaint has now been sometime removed by the institution of a Board which has been of the greatest service, as well as honour, to the cause of agriculture; for, during a war which has increased our expenditure of money and men beyond all former experience or calculations, we have seen nothing of that impoverished condition of our fields, so elegantly lamented by our favourite Georgical poet, in the continuation of the quotation :

Squalent abductis arva colonis,

Et curvæ rigidum falces constantur in Ensem.

But, on the contrary, agriculture has flourished with a vigour which even peace itself can scarcely increase.

In the course of these Letters which have been addressed to you, it has been the view of the writer to preserve the subject of the poor as near as possible what Sir Josiah Child calls it, *a calm subject* : it certainly ought to be so ; but it is not at all times that militating interests, contending opinions, and information of dubious certainty, will admit it to remain so : thus far, at least, I have resolved, — that not an atom of the controversy of general politics, or the ill temper of party prejudice, should be suffered to fall from my pen. The Letters profess an Inquiry into the History of the Poor, their Rights and Duties, and the Laws respecting them. No collateral subject has been agitated which may tend to interrupt that philosophic coolness with which even our *dearest* interests are best canvassed ; and your friend stops his expressions of approbation, at this point, solely with the view of preserving these pages, which

are

are dedicated to the service of the poor, free from any assertion that may lead to a discussion of general politics.

After having been obliged, in the correction, and, in some instances, alteration, of his former publication, to peruse again what he had before written, and to connect with it the new matter which has since arisen, it is probable that, while the whole is fresh in his recollection, the mind may be able to judge more accurately than after the impression of facts and reasons have, by time, become in some measure effaced, of what would be the real and substantial practical improvements which may be introduced in the management of the poor; and he confesses that, of the various ameliorations of the system contained in the Bill now before the House, two seem to your correspondent particularly prominent;—schools of industry, and parliamentary inspection and control. The other parts of the proposed system, although very probably productive of good, have not that good so unmixed with some contiguous evil, which may adulterate the mass, as have these two great objects; and Mr. Bouyer's information, as contained in the last Letter, corroborates the opinion strongly as to the effect of schools of industry when under the control of the legislature; which control also must be an active principle in all the departments of this business, and will be more efficacious than a thousand statutes whose enforcing sanctions are penalties never sued for. The laws of certificates and removals, and those which enabled the overseer to hold out the parish work-house to the distressed pauper as a bugbear to deter him from asking for relief, require no additional freedom from restraint, since the passing those acts of parliament which have been mentioned in the Letters continuing this publication; and the law of settlements (that omission being corrected which has been pointed out as the consequence of the act of parliament which, rumour says, the public stands indebted for to the attention and humanity of Mr. East) will probably remain a harmless, but, were the principles rightly understood, I think an unnecessary, mode of identifying

identifying the parish which must ultimately support the needy pauper; although that mode may still continue to be attended with expenses of law. Some hints received from my friends have occasioned me to consider the probable consequences of a total repeal of all acts of parliament since the 43d of Elizabeth, and the addition of two acts of parliament as aisles, or wings, to that excellent edifice; an act for the education of the children of the poor in industrious habits; and another, instituting a comprehensive and cheap system of parliamentary inspection and control. To judge of the propriety of such an idea, it would be necessary to examine into what would be the real state and condition of the poor, in every bearing and dependency, supposing the magistrates and overseers had no rule of law by which to regulate their conduct, except that statute; an investigation which would require much attention and reflection; and, it is to be feared, if any explanation or additional regulation might be thought necessary, each individual, who might turn his attention to the subject, conceiving the rule, which strikes his mind, as essential, and that the system would be imperfect without it, more auxiliary clauses would be proposed than are contained in all the acts which have been passed since the reign of Elizabeth.

But it is time to conclude the subject, which, thank God, is now before the House of Commons; and is brought before them in the best manner, by the only individual in the nation, who, from every concurrent circumstance favourable to the full investigation of this important regulation, except the political anxiety of the times, could with the greatest and most favourable propriety introduce a law which will affect the internal regulation and comfort of the *whole kingdom*, subject to the poor-laws. This is a regulation which affects *no particular* class or description of men in parliament, confined neither to the interests of those on the right or on the left of the Speaker's chair, but equally concerns every individual in the House; and, when the subject comes before the
House

House of Lords, every peer will feel that the dearest interests of his country are in question ; and I cannot help anticipating, in idea, the satisfaction his Majesty will experience, when the royal prerogative stamps the sanction of law on an act which is calculated to educate millions of his subjects, the rising and the future generations of the labouring-poor of this kingdom, in habits of industry and moral economy, sure preludes to a greater chance of comfort in this life and happiness in the next.

If these pages have in any degree been the means of introducing or accelerating this measure, your friend will have no reason to regret that he has, although in a rough and unpolished style, ventured to publish the History of the Poor, their Rights and Duties, and the Laws respecting them ; which, by laying open to the public the distresses of that valuable and numerous branch of our countrymen, and the great expenses of the other classes of the state in their maintenance, have induced those in power and authority to make use of the advantages of their situation in the behalf of their distressed fellow-subjects.

T. R.

May 11th, 1797.

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E R R A T A.

- Page 31, line 27, *water*, not *waters*.
65, last line, *residents*, not *his majesty's subjects*.
66, line 5, *were*, not *was*.
82, line 11, *country*, not *county*.
141, line 8, *have*, not *has*.
210, line 21, *it* omitted.
221, line 29, *sixty*, not *forty*.
222, line 29, *prevents*, not *prevent*.
224, line 8, *than*, not *that*.
238, line 2, in the note, *country*, not *county*.
292, line 2, in the note, the same mistake.
310, last line, *to* should be omitted.
342, line 15, *country*, not *county*.
343, line 18, *the* omitted, viz. *to the elegant*, &c.
413, line 14, *farmed*, not *formed*.
417, line 3, *their*, not *the*.
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